THE ~~Gramana~~ ~~Aragman~~ ANAGRAM DETECTIVES

by Norma Schier

Introduction by Stanley Ellin

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Limited Edition

THE ANAGRAM DETECTIVES

Puzzle-Pastiches of the World's Greatest Detectives

by Norma Schier

Introduction by Stanley Ellin

DO YOU DETECT an oddly familiar sound, or appearance, to such names as Hoskell Chomers, Owen Foler, Leyne Requel and Sir Ordwey Temple? Then it is not giving away too much to congratulate you on your powers of observation and deduction, and confess that you have recognized the anagrammic aliases of Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe, Ellery Queen and Lord Peter Wimsey—four of the 13 greatest detectives (plus one master crook) contained in this unique collection.

Outstanding pastiches of the fiction of such brilliant authors as Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, Dorothy L. Sayers and John Dickson Carr have been gathered in *The Anagram Detectives.* Ten of the stories first appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* and the remaining four were written especially for this book.

In addition to the world's finest sleuths (or reasonable facsimiles thereof) each solving baffling mysteries, here is the challenge of unscrambling first-rate examples of the anagrammist's art. Each author's name is an anagram, of course, as is each detective's. But so is every other proper name in *The Anagram Detectives* — the first collection of its kind.

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THE ANAGRAM DETECTIVES

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by Norma Schier

Introduction by Stanley Ellin

For Elaine -
With many thanks -
and for the good times -
Norma Schier
5-28-87

New York
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1979

THE ANAGRAM DETECTIVES

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1

INTRODUCTION

by Stanley Ellin

USING MY OWN peculiar method of scorekeeping, I believe that there are two kinds of people on earth. One species, in rattling along through a mystery tale and coming across an anagram or cryptogram or any such devilish little device which promises to offer a clue to the proceedings, will stop right there to work out the device and thus be that much wiser when he shifts gears and continues on course. The other, so aware of his ineptitude in working out anagrams and cryptograms that he gives up on them in advance, simply tears right along to the end of the story without any pit stops.

It is evident on the face of it that since the volume in hand, a clever, entertaining, and maddening collection of pastiches titled *The Anagram Detectives*, is built from start to finish on anagrammatic word play, anybody nominated to write its Introduction should be a dues-paying member of Category Number One as defined above. No doubt with this in mind, the author and editor of this collection then put their devious heads together and selected me for the job, a sort of atrocious final joke on the innocent who will lay down his hard-

earned cash for a copy of the book. Because—and I face this with the equanimity of my advanced age and generally feeble condition—I am honorary chairman of Category Number Two, a man whose thundering ineptitude at working out word puzzles is a hissing and byword right around the known world. And, possibly, around a large part of the unknown world as well.

There is no use my shying away from that fact. Struggling through a crossword puzzle and facing the need to come up with a three letter word for *feline* (n.), the first letter of which is *c* and the third *t*, I can dash off the answer as well as the next customer.* Given any large challenge—one of those four-letter toughies, for example—my brain clatters to a complete stop. It's a good brain, if I say so myself, an excellent brain on occasion, even admired in some circles as exceptionally inventive in a nasty sort of way. But when it comes to the word play involved in anagrams, crossword-puzzles, Scrabble, and the like, some weird malfunction immediately makes itself known, as it would in the case of an otherwise well-designed electronic mechanism which instantly short circuits when a certain button is pushed.

If I were addicted to a Freudian way of thought, I might blame this on the frustrations suffered in sharing life with a beautiful, brilliant, and serene matron who does the *New York Times* and *London Times* crossword-puzzles with an indelible pen, sometimes taking as long as an hour to work out the more difficult cases. And from occasional jousts at Scrabble with a daughter who, a little smile on her ruby lips, plays a cutthroat game wherein you know at once that the throat cut is not going to be hers. And I might even lay part of it on the

*The answer is *c-a-t*. At least I think it is.

presence of a seven-year-old granddaughter who, a facsimile of her mother's Gioconda smile now flickering across her own lips, takes pleasure in beating grandpa's brains out in Kiddie Scrabble.

It would be easy—even pleasurable—to lay my mental short circuit on this unholy gang of over-achievers, but honesty forces me to admit that I first became aware of it fifty years ago, long before any of them had entered my life. That was the time when—a voracious, nonselective reader working my way through my grandfather's laden bookshelves—I walked into the world of Edgar Allan Poe, five well-worn volumes of it, a dour raven etched on the binding of each volume.

What a discovery! I was just on my way out of juvenilia into adult Stevenson and Kipling, but this man plainly put even those Pied Pipers in the shade. Eschewing the poetry, I read through the prose with a sort of joyous horror. I had the feeling that I was not so much reading print here as having the author narrate his imaginings to me with a terrible intensity, his hot breath rasping in my ear. It was like seeing the world through a distorting lens, getting the full measure of that imagination, and so acute was the effect—I must have completed the prose cycle a half dozen times during the next year or so—that it strongly colored my school compositions, much to the unease of my less imaginative instructors.

Only one story in all that gathering threw me. On my first reading of *The Gold Bug* I ran full tilt into the cryptogram which, I was sure, provided the vital clue to the unearthing of the treasure. Unaware of my limitations in this department, I stopped right there to solve it. Since then, I have been informed by experts that this par-

ticular puzzle is indeed just one notch above the idiot level, something that an amiably disposed chimpanzee could work out without furrowing its brow too deeply. Regrettably, when it came to unraveling the cryptogram I fell short of chimpanzee standards. I gave it an honest try, furious at Edgar Allan Poe for putting this obstacle in my way, until finally I had to accept the fact that if I were going to persist in my folly, I would never find out how the story ended, and, for that matter, how any following story ended, since I was reading them in order of appearance.

I gave up on the project, and in later life, as if to prove to myself I had not really been traumatized by the experience, did now and then tackle such challenges but always with the same result. Which is to say, with scant result, if any. It should be remarked here that of all the follies committed by the military mind, few may compare with its decision, when in the year 1945 I was serving in the infantry of my country more or less capably, to snatch me out of that hardworking, non-intellectual branch of the business and send me off for training as a counter-intelligence agent. Luckily for all concerned, before I could do sufficient damage to cost us the war, the opposition itself decided to give up on it.

The final and fateful date that pops up in this psychohistory is that of August, 1965. That was the date when, trusting the editor of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* of all people not to slip the knife into me, I ran into a story in his magazine called *If Hangman Treads,* the very first attempt at fiction, so he announced in his introductory paragraph, of someone apparently named Norma Haigs.

Apparently.

And by the time I had finished the first page I had come into contact with characters apparently named Elaine Haggett, Sylvester Dacoit, and Thora Gatay. And the setting of the tale was the Collam-de Rure Art Galleries. In the phone company's Yellow Pages one may find listed art galleries with offbeat names, but this one, to use Mark Twain's admiring phrase, really took the chromo. So before I even turned to page two of the story, I was faced with a choice of horrid possibilities. Either this author, who otherwise demonstrated a thoroughly professional writing skill in her handling of English, was singularly tone-deaf when it came to naming characters, or else, God help us, she was trying to slip something anagrammatic over on me. My whole past rose up before my eyes. (Affrighted eyes, E. A. Poe would have described them.) Here I was once again back in *The Gold Bug,* impelled, despite my pathetic lack of qualifications, to answer a possible challenge. It was even worse than *The Gold Bug,* because there I knew for a fact that I was confronted by a brain-teaser, while here I wasn't sure whether or not I was.

One cannot escape his *karma.* Hurling maledictions at author and editor, I set out to test my theory on each of those awful names, and by sheer determination finally proved it out with Thora Gatay. So, as I came to learn, were the other names anagrammatic. So, inevitably, was the author's own name. And last, but very much not least, so was the title. How much of my information was gleaned by solo effort and how much was finally revealed to me by the editor's postscript to the story I will not discuss here. I will only remark with a blush that it was of considerable help.

So there it was. This fiendish author, whose name was

in actuality Norma Schier, had concocted a neat little mystery story in which the solution of the crime was merely the cherry on the sundae. Because the story was actually a pastiche of the work of a notable mystery writer; virtually every proper name in it was an anagram; and by working out these puzzles, the reader would be able to determine the identities of familiar characters out of detective classics and the true identity of their original creator. It was a sort of Russian Easter Egg ploy: an egg within an egg within an egg until finally you got down to, as mystics like to put it, True Enlightenment.

Time, as it will, passed, bringing to me the knowledge that *If Hangman Treads* did not represent the last appearance of Norma Schier in my life. Now and again, other samples of her unique and diabolical craft would appear in the pages of *EQMM*, and each time, gritting my teeth and swearing aloud that this was the last time I would be victimized by her, I played the game her way. Slowly, a picture of her took shape in my mind. Something on the order of the least attractive witch out of *Macbeth,* sitting there over a fuming kettle, dropping reptiles, wilted cabbage leaves, and proper names into it, stirring up the unholy brew for my personal benefit. So virulent was the effect that I even contemplated working out a pastiche of the author herself, going so far as to evolve the title *Roman Riches* for it. Roman Riches indeed.

It came as a distinct shock to me, when I finally confronted nemesis at a Mystery Writers of America meeting, to observe that this Roman Riches, far from resembling a Macbethian witch, resembled a trim, strikingly handsome, extremely charming modern witch,

something along the pleasant lines of van Druten's heroine in *Bell, Book, and Candle.* Of course, I was a bit inhibited at first by the thought that everything I said to her was simultaneously being translated into anagrammese in that fertile brain, but that was her problem, not mine.

And your problem, friend?

As soon as you dip into the very first of these wickedly clever little tales, you'll find out.

NOTE: Ten of the fourteen stories in this collection first appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.* The "Editor's Note" following several stories is by Ellery Queen; the "Author's Note" is, of course, by Norma Schier. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of Ellery Queen and *EQMM* to reprint the explanations and annotations which enhanced the magazine appearances of these pastiches.

2

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SOLITARY BRIDE

by E. Aldon Canoy

OF THE MANY adventures which won my amazing friend Hoskell Chomers fame and fortune, no record would be complete without the case which I am about to chronicle. My readers are well-acquainted with Chomers' reticence, which has deprived the world of hearing about the canary trainer, also the fireman's big toe, and the adventure of the third blot. He has, however, unbent enough to suggest that the following case might be published at last, and I hasten to set it down forthwith.

It was during those years when we shared rooms at 221A Krebb Street, and long before I thought I had lost my dear friend forever in his encounter with Professor Marriyot. One clear, frosty morning, I was looking out the window while we waited for our landlady, Mrs. Hounds, to appear with the kippers, bacon and eggs which began our days with such satisfaction to the inner man.

"Well, Sandwort," said Chomers with a chuckle, from behind his newspaper, "I perceive we are about to have a beautiful visitor of the fair sex."

Used as I am to his astonishing powers, I failed to see

how he knew what I saw on the street below, and said so. "Besides," I added, "how can you know that she is coming here?"

"Elementary, my dear Sandwort," he smiled. "You are gazing with a rapt admiration on your face that I am sure no member of the male sex could elicit from you, nor yet an ill-favoured member of the female species. Twice I have made some trivial comment to which you were deaf, so absorbed are you in the object of your scrutiny. As to how I know she is coming here, since your attention has been riveted to one spot for quite three minutes, then undoubtedly the lady has not moved. Therefore she is one of the many who, though they seek my assistance, still feel a reticence which keeps them hesitating before the door. In that case, she may be veiled as well, and you are perhaps assuming beauty from a comely figure and proud carriage. However, I am sure that very shortly—"

Before he could finish, the graceful stranger had vanished from my view, and we heard a timid ring of the bell. Almost immediately Mrs. Hounds appeared with a tray from which rose many tempting aromas, and with the announcement that a young lady wished to see Mr. Chomers.

"Show her up, by all means. You might bring another plate and cup as well, in case she has not breakfasted."

Thus it was that very shortly Lady Treiboris stood before us. Removing her veil, she introduced herself, and was indeed as beautiful as Chomers rightly guessed that I had imagined, with deep violet eyes that at the moment were sorely troubled, and sleek dark hair.

"Well, Madam, will you join me and my friend Sandwort for breakfast? No? A cup of coffee then? It is a

chilly morning. Pray be seated, and tell us how we may serve you. Apart from the fact that you are in a state of unusual agitation, newly married or worried about your marriage, perhaps both, have recently come from the southern portion of America but are trying to adapt to our British ways, have come up from the country this morning, and that your bridegroom is wealthy and of an old and titled family, I know nothing."

The lady gasped, then said, "You seem to know a great deal. Apparently you have heard something of me, though I cannot imagine how."

"No, Madam, I have not had the pleasure of knowing about you till you yourself appeared. What I state are simple deductions based on observation. For example, your agitation is apparent from the fact that the gloves you have just removed do not match—one is brown and the other black—though you are otherwise fastidiously attired. A shock, then, presumably occurring after dressing, that led to your hastily snatching up gloves as you decided to consult me. From the way you are twisting your wedding ring, I deduce that you are either unused to it, therefore newly wed, or worried about your marriage. Both would be quite within the realm of probability when a lovely young matron comes alone to consult me. Your speech reflects American accents, with a flavouring of the Southern dialect. I have written a small monograph on the subject."

"But how could you know I am trying—as indeed I am—to adapt to your country?"

"Many English-speaking foreigners do not alter their speech by one iota, even after years in another land. Yet I heard you attempting to replace American pronunciations with British ones."

"But my husband's wealth and position?"

"Easily inferred from the ostensible value of your engagement and wedding rings, the one new, the other with old-fashioned setting and crest.

"Finally, only in the country could you have gotten mud upon your boots today, for we have a hard frost here in London."

"Oh," she murmured, "at first it seemed that you were quite brilliant."

"And now it does not," Chomers said drily. "I must cease to explain my little deductions.

"Now," he added briskly, "do tell us what is troubling you so."

"My husband has disappeared," she blurted out. Tears sprang to her eyes, to which she applied a dainty handkerchief. "We *are* newly married, and I just can't understand it."

Chomers reached for a red volume from among his reference books. "Let us see," he said, opening it upon his knee, "Treiboris. Ah, yes. Your aristocratic bridgegroom's full name is Craig Adomcort Treiboris. Hum. Apart from the fact that he is indeed of an old and honoured family, I see little here that is instructive. When did you discover him missing?"

"Yesterday morning," she answered promptly. "When I arose, I discovered that he hadn't been to bed at all. I hurried downstairs, and questioned the butler, Heurlbett. He has been with the family for years, and his ancestors before him, and I would suppose him to be absolutely trustworthy. He informed me that my husband had been called away on urgent business in the north, but that I should hear from him shortly. I thought it strange that he had made no mention of this

to me, nor did he come to bid me goodbye before starting off, but as we have barely begun our married life, I do not know his ways.

"I would still be at home, impatiently awaiting his return, rather than seeking you out, were it not for some rather strange, though apparently trivial, occurrences."

"Ah!" exclaimed Chomers, "pray continue."

"I wandered into the drawing room before breakfast, and found there a sheet of paper with arrangements of playing cards upon it. I can't conceive how it came to be there; it surely wasn't there the night before. I might still have dismissed it as of no importance, had not Heurlbett entered at that moment and seemed quite anxious to take the paper from me. Normally he is as imperturbable as his kind generally are, yet he all but snatched the paper from my hand. His words seemed ordinary enough. He said, 'Beg pardon, my lady, the maids have been careless; allow me to dispose of that,' but I had the strong impression that he felt an urgent need to have that paper. So much so that I jotted down what I had seen, though I gave up the paper meekly enough. Fortunately, I have a photographic mind. This is how it looked."

K♣7♥ J♥ 10♦
J♥K♣A♣10♥Q♥J♠
4♣ 10♣6♣Q♥K♣10♣10♠2♣ 6♣ 8♣ 3♣10♣Q♠

"A pretty puzzle," Chomers said approvingly, with the gleam in his eyes I knew so well. "Anything else?"

"Yes. Through the window I saw a man slinking toward the stables. He was edging by the bushes, and I caught but scant glimpses, but I could see that he was clad in workman's clothing, was rather a young man, and had a weak chin, making him look rather ferrety. I hurried out to the stables, but he was nowhere in sight. When I asked O'Mertogh, the groom, about him, he said there was not and never had been any such person working about the place. I tackled Heurlbett too, but he insisted I must have been mistaken.

"You may imagine I passed an uneasy twenty-four hours, wondering if something underhanded were going forward, or if I were merely overwrought. If something *were* amiss, I don't see why the servants wouldn't urge a report to the police, and I cannot imagine that they have harmed their master, for they seem most loyal and devoted.

"Still, when I came down this morning, rather early, for I had passed a troubled night, and found yet another piece of paper covered with playing cards, my anxieties mounted afresh. When I espied the same ferrety fellow out by the bushes, I became frightened and determined to seek your help without further delay."

"Have you that second sheet of paper?"

"Yes, I snatched it up before I should be found with it, and brought it along. Here it is."

"Excellent!" Chomers rubbed his hands together and his eyes sparkled. "Let's take a look."

Here is the paper we scanned, to our bafflement.

K♣ 6♣ A♥ 10♦7♣ 10♣10♣6♠ J♥ 10♣10♣6♠
4♣7♥6♥9♣7♥6♠7♣10♣Q♥Q♥10♣J♠ J♣7♥10♠6♥7♥2♠
A♣Q♠K♣6♣9♦ 7♣10♣Q♥Q♥10♣10♠7♣10♦9♣7♥ 10♥6♦

"Now," Chomers said, "a few questions to be sure I understand the situation correctly. Had there been a quarrel of any kind between you and your husband?"

"Not at all," she assured us earnestly. "He is a most wonderful and loving man, and we have been as happy and devoted as two love birds. He has been taking such pride and pleasure in familiarizing me with his estate. He is a proud man at all events, but I see no harm in that."

"Then he is also proud of his personal appearance?"

"Exceedingly so. He really is inclined to vanity. He is a striking figure, with a handsome face and bearing. He takes particular pride in his fine head of hair and his beard, which is full and glossy, and trimmed just so. As I have often told him, it was his glorious appearance which first drew me to him. Of course now that I know him, there are a thousand better reasons for loving him."

"Is vanity the only fault of this paragon?"

"I believe he is somewhat impulsive and hasty in his decisions, but the soul of kindness and consideration."

"I see. Did anything unusual occur on the last evening you spent together?"

"Not at all. It was a most ordinary evening. He was going over some papers his estate agent had brought in that day, while I read a book. When I was ready to retire he was still absorbed in his papers, but said he would be along soon. Oh!"

"You have remembered something?"

Just after I retired, I did hear some slight commotion. I went out to investigate, and met Heurlbett in the passage. He assured me it was a trivial domestic accident, and that I need not trouble myself. Do you think that has significance?"

"We shall see. Heurlbett seems quite ubiquitous. Now, just one other thing. I take it you have brought no servants of your own to your new home?"

Our fair client was amazed. "However did you know that?"

"I have my methods, Lady Treiboris."

"Well, you are perfectly right. I had a maid when I first came over here, but she missed her homeland and her people, and when I made my decision to settle here permanently she returned across the sea. But, oh! Mr. Chomers, what has become of my darling, and what has my maid to do with it?"

"A great deal, I believe. Now, Lady Treiboris, I beg you to worry no longer, for I am sure all will be well. In fact, if my deductions are correct, we may be able to clear up this business very shortly."

"You don't mean that you know what has happened!"

"Oh, yes. A simple problem, though not without some instructive features. However, I wish to confirm one or two points before I speak. I rather fancy the playing cards can tell us the rest of the story, and I shall

study them most carefully. Can you spend the day in London?"

"My husband—we—have a town house, but I believe it is closed up at present. However, I still have the house I leased when I first came, and I can spend the day there."

"Good. Let me have the address, and I should like to know the street and number of the town house as well. It might come in useful. Now, if you would just write a note to the worthy Heurlbett, instructing him to receive us and answer our questions, we will be off to Surrey to test my theory. You shall hear from me before the day is out."

The lady rose to go. "Do you think we should notify the police?"

"It is more than likely that our good friends Streadle and Noggers and their kind would only botch matters. Sandwort and I can handle this case quite adequately. Of course, you have a perfect right to call them in if you wish."

"I am in your hands," the lady stated, "and will do as you advise. I shall wait to hear from you. Good day."

"Of course, Sandwort, it is all clear to you?" Chomers said with a twinkle, after she had left.

"No," said I. "I must confess I am quite baffled."

"But it is perfectly plain. Consider, for instance, the clue of the butler's attitude."

"But there is apparently nothing amiss in the butler's attitude!"

"Exactly, my dear Sandwort! And now, let us get ready for our journey, for the game is afoot!

In short order a hansom was hurrying us to Waterloo, and we were soon settled into a compartment heading

into the lush green Surrey countryside. Chomers spread out the two papers covered with playing cards upon his knee.

"Come, Sandwort, what do you infer from these?"

"It seems," said I, "like a secret code, a communication between the ferret-faced chap and someone in the house, for both times that Lady Treiboris found these papers, she saw the fellow lurking as well. It seems almost inescapable that the butler is lying, and is in league with this mysterious stranger."

"Excellent, Sandwort! Now to decode the messages."

Without further ado, he produced pencil and paper, furrowed his brow, and set to work.

"Aha!" he cried about half an hour later. "I think there is just time to show you what I have done before we reach our destination.

"I began with the second message, as it is longer and affords more clues. I was hoping for a simple substitution cipher, where each card might stand for a different letter, and I was right. To begin with, you see we have mostly clubs and hearts, with a light sprinkling of diamonds and spades. I thought to try regarding the latter as marking ends of words, which would be consistent with their infrequency. Consider that a deck has fifty-two cards, whereas only twenty-six are needed for the alphabet. Hence two suits suffice, with two over for word endings, if my theory was correct. I tried arranging the cards from ace to king or deuce to ace, beginning with clubs and going on with hearts, and matching them with the alphabet beginning with a, but our code deviser was a bit cannier than that. I then tried some substitutions, and here is what I got. The ten of clubs appears twice as a double letter in the middle of two four-letter

words, so is probably o or e. Now here is a ten of diamonds—a possible word ending, and as diamonds follows clubs, very likely belonging with the club sequence. That makes e the more probable for the ten of clubs and diamonds. Further on, we come to two three-letter words with the seven of hearts in the middle. Few three-letter words have a consonant as their middle letter, and it is hardly likely there would be two in a row. Now, if we try the seven of hearts as a vowel, and look at this word that goes as follows: 4♣, 7♥, 6♥, 9♣, 7♥, 6♥, what does that suggest? Suppose the cards *are* in sequence, though starting with other than ace or deuce. Then the 6♥ would stand for the letter preceding the 7♥ in the alphabet. Trying the 7♥ as a vowel, we have the following possibilities: _az_az, _ih_ih, _on_on, _ut_ut. We omit e, which we have already employed. Look at the third one. Does not 'London' leap to the eye? Now we also have the possibility of an orderly sequence being followed. Are there other indications? Yes, we have d and e as the nine and ten of clubs. This provides two lines of attack. We can arrive at the sequence from the letters we have, or we can continue to deduce substitutions from context. Here is what we have so far:

_ _ _e/_ e e n/_e e n
L o n d o n/_e _ _ e _/_o_/n o_
_ _/_ _ d/_ e_ _ e _/_e/d o_____

You can easily see more possibilities there. 'been seen' seems likely for the first line, and we can fill in more bs. That suggests 'better' in the second and third lines, with the double letter in the center, giving us t and r. A little application can give us the rest.

"Now, looking at sequence, what do we have?

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
7♣ 9♣10♣ 4♣ 6♥7♥ 10♥J♥Q♥

All is clear, is it not? We can readily fill it in, giving us the complete code, thus:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w z y z
♣6 7 8 9 10 J Q K A 2 3 4 5 ♥6 7 8 9 10 J Q K A 2 3 4 5

"Let us apply this to the first message and see what we get.

hose
shirts
leather jacket

"What do you make of that, Sandwort?"

"How disappointing!" I cried. "Although you must be right about the code, as words have emerged, here we must have still another code, with these items standing for something of more significance."

Chomers looked at me quizzically. "You may be right. Let us pass on to the next. We have:

have been seen
London better for now
it had better be Dora

"Why," said I in some excitement, "here we have real information. That may be the stranger himself, seen by Lady Treiboris, perhaps fleeing to London in consequence.

"But who is Dora, and what evil designs has he upon her?"

"That will have to wait," said Chomers, "for here is our station. Quick, Sandwort, let us hire a carriage. I

wish to make a brief stop to send off two—no, three—telegrams, and then we can proceed to investigate the scene of the disappearance. I think you are right, however, and the trail will lead us back to London. It would be as well to inform ourselves of return trains."

Before long we were drawing up before the beautiful estate of the Treiboris family, an ancient stone building set in gracious grounds. Heurlbett showed us into the drawing room after reading the note from his mistress, and prepared to withdraw.

"One moment!" Chomers said brusquely. The butler paused.

"Tell me, man, quickly!" snapped my friend. "You had the doctor here the other night?"

"Oh, yes, sir. That is—" the man looked momentarily confused. "One of the servants became ill, you understand."

"That's all for now," Chomers said. "We may call upon you again later."

The butler withdrew. I was disappointed that Chomers had not asked him about the ferret-faced man, but doubtless he had his reasons. When the door had closed behind Heurlbett, Chomers, with the animation that characterized him when on the scent, dropped to the floor, examined the carpet minutely with his glass, and generally gave the room a microscopically thorough examination. Finally, he gave a satisfied grunt and rang for the butler.

"Look here," he said, when the servant appeared. "How do you explain this stain upon the carpet?"

"I couldn't say, sir, I'm sure," the butler replied impassively. "It is not my function to tend this room. That

is the job of the parlourmaid, Dora Lampuir."

"Bring her here, then."

"I'm sorry, sir. She has been called away to tend a sick relative."

He hesitated. "Please, sir, I would like to say something. I know her ladyship called you in, and that is quite understandable. But she is not yet familiar with his lordship's habits, and is alarmed quite unnecessarily. He is away on business, as I told her, and often dashes off without notice. Believe me, sir," he continued earnestly, "you would do them both a service to accept that explanation."

"Hum, perhaps," murmured Chomers. "All the same, I shall continue my investigation. Tell O'Mertogh to expect us in a few minutes.

"Look at this stain on the carpet," Chomers exclaimed after the butler had left. "I have examined it with my lens, and it is blood, undoubtedly of recent origin.

"Now, let us go to the stables."

I was feeling both alarm and pity for Lady Treiboris as we crossed the courtyard. The bloodstains suggested sinister possibilities. It seemed too that the missing parlourmaid, undoubtedly the Dora of the coded message, had fallen afoul of the villains.

Chomers paused by a well, and threw a pebble into it. It seemed ages before we finally heard a faint splash. "These are deep waters, Sandwort," he cried, "but I believe I have got to the bottom of them."

We entered the stables. The groom was vague, but essentially reiterated what we had been told, that he had never had a man such as Lady Treiboris described working for him, nor, as far as he knew, was there such a per-

son on the gardening staff. Chomers, nonetheless, was determined to examine the stables. In the loft we discovered a pallet of straw.

"There!" said Chomers with satisfaction. "Our man has slept here, but as no personal possessions remain, he has apparently flown. It is time we returned to London."

Chomers said little on the return journey. "You see, do you not," he ventured at one point, "that the accident is the key to the business?" I could get no further explanation from him, and on our return to 221A Krebb Street, he filled his pipe from the Persian slipper and immersed himself in clouds of blue smoke, saying only that all would be explained later. Her also ventured some strains upon his violin, but of the case no word would he say.

As dinner time approached, caterers appeared and laid a festive table for four. No sooner had they departed than our lovely visitor of the morning was shown up. She eyed the table in some puzzlement, no more than my own.

"I came in response to your message," she said. "But whom else do you expect?"

"Do you wonder? Hark, I hear him now!"

At that moment, a tall, broad-shouldered man with a glossy brown beard strode through our doorway. Lady Treiboris exclaimed and ran to him. Then she hesitated.

"I don't understand," she said with a catch in her voice. "Here you are safe and sound. Why did you leave me without even the barest farewell?"

"Come, sir," Chomers addressed the stranger briskly. "I feel certain you have done your lady an injustice, and she will in truth care none the less for you. I recom-

mend you make a clean breast of the matter, or rather, a clean chin. Off with the beard, and tell her all."

"You may have something there," the gentleman rejoined, and gave a tug at his beard. It came away in his hand, revealing a receding chin.

His wife looked astonished, and then broke into peals of laughter. "I think I begin to understand," said she. "It was *you* whom I saw slinking about. Did you really think, my darling, that I would love you less without your beard? Though it does become you, and you might replace the false one before you explain."

"Mr. Chomers is right," said he, grinning. "I should have had more faith in your love.

"After you retired the other night," he began, "I was making some small adjustment to the chandelier when it slipped, hitting me in the face and giving me a nasty cut on the chin. Heurlbett sent for the doctor, who insisted on shaving off my beloved beard, that he might stitch the cut. You have so often told me how you cherish my looks, and our marriage is so new and untried, that I feared you might be repelled by this weak chin with which the good God furnished me, and care for me no more. My first plan, with the help of Heurlbett, was to camp in the stables till the beard should grow back. We had not yet apprised O'Mertogh of the situation when you questioned him (I heard you from my hiding place), and as you had actually seen me, it seemed risky, as well as inconvenient, to remain.

"I then decided to go to the town house. Heurlbett was surprisingly slow to take action on that decision. I spoke to him after I saw you drive away this morning, and he, unaccountably, claimed he had not got my message to that effect."

Chomers chuckled. "Your lady took it, though she doesn't know it. She must have snatched up the paper before the butler had a chance to see it. I presume that is a code you worked out with the butler, as a child, for boyish larks. The first message directed him, I don't doubt, to bring you the clothing you required."

"Quite right," smiled Treiboris. "It seemed the most convenient way to communicate with Heurlbett just now without being seen in my shorn condition. I had not expected Lady Treiboris up so early. You seem to know all about it. I was going to wait in London for the beard to grow, and write her a letter to assure her of my continuing devotion and well-being. I got this false beard today, but felt it would not suffice, as it would surely slip when I was asleep. You can imagine my astonishment at receiving a telegram summoning me here. Only the servants knew where I was, and they would never tell."

"It was simplicity itself," said Chomers. "I was quite sure foul play could be ruled out, or the servants would not have gone so serenely about their business without concern for their master's disappearance. (That, my dear Sandwort, is the significance of the clue of the butler's attitude.) I could not believe the tale of business demands any more than your wife, for what truly loving bridegroom would dash off without a farewell to his bride? I briefly considered that your love was merely a pretense, but your lady was quite sure it was genuine. The greater probability was that something had occurred which occasioned your not wanting her to see you. I wondered if your appearance had somehow been adversely affected, and asked if you were vain of your looks. I learned that not only was that the case, but your

wife has told you it was your looks that won her affections. When I also learned of the beard of which you are extremely proud, and the mysterious appearance of a weakchinned 'stranger' communicating with your devoted butler, it was not difficult to deduce a facial cut, or a doctor requiring the beard to be shaved off so that he might treat it. The report of a disturbance after the lady left you, and the bloodstains I discovered offered corroboration, as did the butler's acknowledgment of the doctor. I reasoned that if you had another house, you would go to it, and the second message confirmed that. Dora, the parlourmaid, was, I presume, designated to make it ready."

"Well, you are remarkable," said Treiboris. "I'm glad my wife went to you, for we now have a firmer base than ever to our marriage, thanks to you, and need not be parted any longer besides."

"But, Chomers," said I, "what about Lady Treiboris' maid?"

"Why, it seemed clear that the household servants were in on a conspiracy to hide their master. If she had servants of her own, they would be bound to hear something of it amongst the servants' talk, and being loyal to *her,* would have told her. If such were the case, the theory I was developing would not have held up, and we should have had to look elsewhere.

"And now, it is my hope that you will all join me for this supper I have ordered brought here—the object of my third telegram.

"Besides," he added, as we drew up our chairs, "were there a villain in the case, his name would have revealed him."

"There, Chomers, you are wrong," said I. "There

was one character in the case whose name was ostensibly unknown to us. How could you be sure (until you proved he was Lord Treiboris himself) that the skulking, weak-chinned stranger was not named, for instance, Vanilli?"

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I couldn't resist giving Sandwort the last word. I felt he deserved it after patiently playing straight man for so long. What he and Chomers meant was that all the characters' names are anagrams that somehow reveal their roles, yet no character in this story is thus indicated as a villain. ('Vanilli' is an anagram of villain.)

Of course readers recognized the subject of this pastiche, that violin-playing master of deduction, who could only be Sherlock Holmes, with his faithful Dr. Watson, here anagrammed to Hoskell Chomers and Sandwort. (Some of the names lent themselves irresistibly to humorous anagrams.) Nor could I resist Mrs. Hounds for Mrs. Hudson, their unfailing landlady at 221B Baker Street, here rearranged to 221A Krebb Street.

Reference is also made to other old standbys of the Sherlock Holmes stories, the two Scotland Yard detectives he most often outthought, Lestrade and Gregson, here represented as Streadle and Noggers. Professor Moriarty becomes Marriyot. Lady Treiboris—solitary bride, as the title indicates

Craig Adomcort Treiboris—aristocratic bridegroom (Chomers actually says, "Your aristocratic bridegroom's full name is . . . ," a dead giveaway)

Heurlbett—the butler
O'Mertogh—the groom
Dora Lamuir—parlourmaid

All of the above being so, the author, E. Aldon Canoy, obviously stands revealed as the incomparable A. Conan Doyle.

3

THE OBJECT LESSON

by W. H. Guernon

THE ADVENTURE WHICH I am about to relate holds a very special place in my recollections, for reasons which will presently become apparent. It began one Autumn afternoon, just as I was finishing an article deploring a recent series of daring and efficient thefts, totally undetected, and showing no signs of abating. My regret that there seemed little likelihood that the crimes would let up in the near future was not feigned, for I would rather have settled down, at least until the wolf, or, more accurately, the bailiff, was nearer the door. However, at this time there was no stopping L.A. Jeffars.

He seemed veritably drunk with success, as drunk as ever I became in the more ordinary way, and each coup only tempted him to fresher and bolder efforts. I was writing this article at his suggestion, for where I would much prefer to be as inconspicuous as possible, especially in anything relating to crime, it was his idea that to make oneself known in some other capacity was first-rate camouflage. I must confess that it was not difficult to get into the spirit of the thing. As I say, I could be quite sincere in wishing an immediate end to the burglaries —

though not, perhaps, for the same reason as the general public — and I was rather enjoying taking the police to task for being outwitted time and again.

I was just polishing some last phrases, when I heard a step on the stairs of my Otnum Street flat — for this was in the good old days when Jeffars and I were still warmly welcome in society, and long before our safety, or Jeffars' at any rate, depended on the dubious Dr. Aldobeth.

It was Jeffars himself, as breezy and debonair as ever.

"Get your hat, Namby, for we are to spend the afternoon at the National Gallery."

I began to protest. I had in fact been contemplating a generous peg of whisky as reward for my labours of the day, but my objections fell, as usual, on deaf ears.

"Later, my dear Namby, you shall have your fill. Right now, a little culture will do you good," said he, laughing.

"That's all very well for *you,*" I was still grumbling as I settled myself into a hansom by his side, "but I care not a farthing for Art, as you well know." For Jeffars has a love and appreciation for Beauty in its visual form which is forever lost on me. Yet I was also powerless to refuse him, which is how we came to be strolling through the National Gallery on that particular Thursday. Belatedly it occurred to me that he might be contemplating the abduction of some exhibit there, which gave me a thrill of fear; there are times when his audacity, in my opinion, goes well beyond the bounds of common sense, and I think that robbing the National Gallery would be a damn fool thing to do. However, the thought that he was including me in his preliminary scouting for once did much to mollify my bad temper at being hauled to a place where I had no wish to be.

Besides, I became too occupied with trying to think of ways to dissuade him to remember how disgruntled I was.

Yet as the afternoon wore on, I doubted this construction of its purpose. We covered a good many galleries of that institution, yet Jeffars had but a casual eye for the works exhibited. Nor did he appear to have a particular objective. We wandered at random, it seemed, yet somewhat more rapidly than is usually the case when inspecting works of art.

When we reentered the third or fourth of rooms we had already seen, I was about to protest afresh when Jeffars, by my side, uttered a low, satisfied cry. He led me over to where two young ladies were assiduously examining a Mortslade and raised his hat.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "What a lucky chance to see you ladies again today! Let me introduce my good friend Namby Runsden. Namby, meet the Misses Ruth Daggerand and Mona Picon. I was honoured to make their acquaintance at a dinner last evening."

The young ladies seemed quite pleasantly surprised to encounter Jeffars, but for my part, I was puzzled and irritated once more. That he had not met them by accident, but had dragged me here for the very purpose of this 'chance meeting' I had no doubt, but the reason escaped me. Jeffars is not, as a rule, one for the ladies, and while one of these was pretty and one was drab, neither seemed particularly different from the scores of young girls that grace any London season.

Almost before I knew it, Jeffars had wandered to the other end of the room with the pretty one, where they stood with their heads together talking in low murmurs,

and paying scant attention to the paintings, while I was left to make conversation as best I might with the plain one. How like Jeffars, I thought sullenly, then dutifully turned my attention to Mona Picon.

Actually, she was not so ill-favoured as had at first appeared, but was quite pretty in her own unassuming way. I decided it must be the worn-out, ill-fitting clothes that had given me that first impression, together with a manner so uncertain and apologetic as to be almost abject. Yet she brightened a bit as I showed some interest in her, but all the while I was wondering what Jeffars was up to, and when it might please him to leave this hall of culture for some homier, more fulfilling pleasures. I thought longingly of my sideboard, with its whisky and siphon.

As if in answer to my thought, he and his pretty companion turned and strolled our way.

"Namby, what do you think?" he smiled. "We have just been invited to spend the weekend with these lovely ladies. Miss Daggerand's grandmother, Lady Woolwentham, is having a house party, which we are to join. You have nothing on, have you?"

He stooped to brush a speck from his trousers, managing to throw me a look which said as plainly as words, "Play up, you fool!" In consequence, I just managed not to put my foot in it, while the old anger swept over me at Jeffars for not taking me into his confidence, that I might the better play my part.

Back in my flat, the dear old whisky glass in my hand, I softened when he assured me that I should know all at this very moment.

"Namby, Lady Woolwentham simply drips with diamonds! So much was clear at the dinner last night. From her ears, her bosom, her fingers! You never saw so many

jewels on one single, fat, disgusting person. She's a wealthy old woman, but utterly disagreeable. You know my principles, Namby, never to steal from a house in which I am a guest. Bad taste, poor manners, and all that. It simply isn't done. But this woman takes the prize for bad manners. She's greedy and a fool. Why, you should see how she treats that poor Mona Picon, who is her companion, and a poor relation, I think. She makes an absolute slavey of her, forcing her to wear cast-off clothes that are worn out and don't fit, and generally humiliating her. The poor girl is only allowed out on Thursdays, to accompany Miss Daggerand in her pursuit of Art. That grim old she-devil deserves to be taught a lesson! Her greed is evident from the positively indecent number of diamonds she flaunts, and her foolishness from the way she wears them about everywhere, as I am told she does. But that's not the half of it, Namby," and he gave me a significant look, "she leaves them in a jewel case on her dressing table at night, won't lock them up. Don't you think she's asking for it?"

Some of his outrage and enthusiasm began to communicate themselves to me, and I endeavored to fight down the image that rose to my mind of those two charming young clubmen, L. A. Jeffars, the well-known and extraordinarily talented cricketer, and my modest but agreeable self, being discovered at a house party cracking a crib in the hostess' boudoir.

"You are right, Namby," he added, totally misreading my thoughts, or perhaps seizing the excuse to put forth his own, "it is not very sporting. I look at it as an object lesson with which we are obligated to provide the lady."

And so it was that a few days later saw us stepping out of a dashing carriage at Shetley Moat, the impressive

stately home of the Dowager Duchess, Lady Woolwentham, just in time to dress for dinner.

I thought I was designated to take in Miss Picon, who, slavey or not, was included in the party, probably to make an even number, when I saw her being whisked away on Jeffars' arm, while Ruth Daggerand stood by my side, a bewildered look on her pretty face. I gallantly offered my arm, and in we went.

She seemed somewhat abstracted, which was just as well, as my own thoughts were still dwelling on Jeffars' plans. For his part, he seemed as absorbed in Miss Picon as he had at the gallery in Miss Daggerand. I could see that the latter was not unaware of it, nor was she pleased.

Her grandmother was very much as Jeffars had described her. Her whole person seemed to blaze with diamonds, mostly single stones set in rings, earrings, broach, and one magnificent pendant. She had greeted us with no marked cordiality, though she had thawed somewhat toward Jeffars on being told that he was a famous cricketer who played for the Gentlemen, but for myself she showed scarce more respect than for the unfortunate Mona Picon. As I watched her at dinner, from a long way down the table, being gracious to the titled, famous and wealthy, and rude and contemptuous toward the rest, I began to look forward to Jeffars' programme with positive relish.

"I see you are admiring my grandmother's diamonds."

Miss Daggerand's voice recalled me to the present, just as I was lifting a glass of champagne to my lips. I almost spilled it.

"Er — yes — they are most impressive," I mumbled.

"Do you know, I've had the most awful time trying to

get her to take proper care of them. Finally, just today, she had a safe put in, after I managed to convince her that her insurance firm would take a dim view of the casual way she'd been keeping them."

"Good for you," I said, and hoped my voice didn't sound as hollow as I felt. Well, at least I could breathe easier knowing we would be on the right side of the law for this weekend at any rate. The thing now was to get hold of L.A. and apprise him of this development.

This proved no easy matter. After dinner there was no sign of him, and I had to try to make myself agreeable to the company with my mind on quite other things. I fancy that I am no mean hand at the social graces, but I have yet to learn to sustain them when Jeffars and I are plotting something, let alone when the plot has gone amiss.

Lady Woolwentham began calling, shrilly and peremptorily, for her companion, who appeared after a short delay, somewhat breathless.

"Where are my drops, you stupid girl? Can't you be relied upon at all? I only let you come to these affairs out of the kindness of my heart; you had better have the goodness to be in attendance and not forget your duties!" Her face was grim as the girl scurried away, and when I glanced round after that little scene, there was my friend Jeffars, coolly looking on with an ironical smile.

Yet even after I had found him, my efforts to seek private converse were fruitless. He became the life of the party. I finally went up to bed, and was just pouring myself a generous peg from the flask I had had the forethought to bring with me when there was the softest of taps on the door.

"My poor Namby, when will you ever learn?" he asked ruefully when he had come in, clad in slippers and dressing gown, and carefully closed the door behind him. "Would you really sit around in a houseful of people, servants moving to and fro, and discuss robbery where any guest or footman might hear us?"

"Yes, I see what you mean, but I wanted to tell you it's all up. The old lady has a safe after all."

"Do you think I didn't know that? Why do you think I bore Miss Picon in to dinner, when I should have taken Miss Daggerand, and out to the terrace afterward, but to check out all the details? As the old lady's companion, she might be expected to know a good deal of her arrangements, as indeed she did."

Good old Jeffars! I should have known he wouldn't neglect a pal except in the line of business. He continued with growing eagerness.

"But that only makes it more sporting. My word! Did you see that pendant? Our efforts would be worth it for that alone. Luckily, I have brought all my tools along. It is as well never to take a thing for granted."

He began to pace back and forth in that excited way he has when his interest is aroused in a prize he covets. I watched him uneasily, for I have often felt that one day he will go too far, and that, with all his cleverness, resourcefulness, and courage, retribution will catch up with us.

"Now," said he, stopping his pacing at last and throwing himself into an armchair, "here's the plan. Lady Woolwentham has a suite on this floor, not far from your bedroom. Mona Picon has the room next to hers on the other side. The suite consists of a sitting room, dressing room, bedroom and bath. The safe is in

the sitting room, behind a picture. People are so unoriginal, aren't they? You can hardly blame thieves nowadays for stealing, when all is made so predictable. It's as though she were begging us to."

"You don't think," I ventured, "that she might continue to use the jewel case? Old people so often cling to old habits."

"Really, Namby," he scoffed, "when she's been impressed enough with the importance of the safe to have it installed?

"She should be sleeping soundly," he went on. "Those drops were a sleeping draught, and that, with the champagne, should effectively prevent her from waking. The main danger, I think, comes from our little friend Mona Picon, whose room communicates with the Dowager's sitting room. Her maid sleeps in the servants' quarters, and yours is the only other occupied room on this part of the floor. Your part will be to listen for signs that Miss Picon has been alerted, and warn me in time for us both to get away before we are seen.

"Did you bring your mask and ruffianly clothes, as I told you? Good man! Then if we are seen, there is still a chance to get away without recognition, and resume our roles as innocent guests. I have my things on under my dressing gown."

Another half hour found us, suitably disguised, even to caps pulled well over our ears, slipping softly into Lady Woolwentham's suite. She had taken the precaution of locking her door, but Jeffars' picklocks made quick work of that. It was, so he whispered to me, a disappointingly simple lock. I, for one, was not disappointed.

Once inside the sitting room, with the door shut be-

hind us, we had little difficulty locating the safe. The room was rather stuffy and old-fashioned, and most of the pictures also had the comfortable, slightly faded air of having been long-term residents. One alone wore the shiny air of a newcomer, and for this Jeffars instantly headed. Gently he laid out his tools and deftly set to work. I could not resist the temptation to peek into the lady's dressing room, despite Jeffars' earlier scoffing. I felt it would take but a moment to scan the dressing table, and then I should take up my appointed station by the opposite doorway. Sure enough, there was a small jewel case in plain view, and in my excitement — heightened, I must confess, by my desire to score off Jeffars for once — caution deserted me for a fatal split-second, and I stumbled.

I stood electrified. At first all was still, and I began to breathe naturally again, but then ominous sounds came to my ears that froze me all the more rigidly in my tracks. From the inner room issued creakings, rumblings, and snorts, all suggestive of an old lady waking up. I looked wildly around me for something that would help to save our situation. Impulsively I snatched up the old lady's dressing gown, with some notion of delaying pursuit, for I reasoned she would be loath to rouse the house without some such covering, and it also occurred to me that, at the very worst, it might be used as a sort of strait jacket, to render her helpless, and even, thrust over her head, prevent recognition.

Still carrying it, I rushed into the sitting room.

"Flee," I hissed. "She's awake."

Jeffars needed no second warning. In one motion he scooped up his tools, and I caught the merest glimpse, as we shot through the door, of the safe ajar, and a fire-

breathing dragon in nightdress, nightcap askew, standing in the doorway of the dressing room.

We managed to reach my room, so blessedly nearby, before she had reached her own outer door, so that she was none the wiser as to who the intruders were, or where they had gone. The imperious ring for her companion was clearly audible within my bedroom, and there we stood, clothed and masked as burglars, I with the Dowager's dressing gown in my hand, Jeffars with the telltale tools in his pocket.

He tore off his mask, and his eyes were sparkling with that devil-may-care look I knew so well.

"Here's where we show what we're made of, Namby, old thing," he laughed. "Sympathetic guests, eager to lay the miscreants by the heels, aghast at the outrage perpetrated on our hostess.

"Quick, off with your things, and into your pyjamas and dressing gown. That's it. Let's just tousle your hair a bit." He stood back to survey me, head cocked on one side.

"Excellent! The very picture of a guest roused from sleep by running footsteps and bells pealing — *in that order,* understand? Really, your bedroom is most providentially placed for this little charade. Tell them you caught a glimpse of a man or two running down the stairs. Give the impression they went out by the window on the landing. Organize a search. I will make one or two little arrangements, and join you later."

It was not difficult to carry out Jeffars' latest resourceful scheme. Lady Woolwentham and Mona Picon were standing bewilderedly in the passage, and even as I emerged Lady Woolwentham's maid came running up, accompanied by Ruth Daggerand. The maid and the

girls looked confused and uncertain; the Dowager looked as if she were about to have an apoplectic fit.

Excitedly I told them of hearing pounding footsteps which had awakened me, and of just catching sight of someone disappearing down the stairs. I was able to convey that it could have been one, two, or three men, that I couldn't be sure. I added that I had just stepped back inside to fetch my dressing gown, an improvisation of my own to account for the slight delay in my appearance. Jeffars wasn't the only one who could think quickly in a tight place!

I advised the ladies to summon footmen and gentlemen guests to give chase, and to notify the police, before dashing off myself in an ostensible endeavor to apprehend the criminal or criminals, not without some anxious moments. What if the window gave on a sheer drop, or worse, was unmoveably stuck or locked?

To my relief I found it already open, and shouted back, "I have found their way of escape! This window!" I lost no time in climbing through it, and found myself on top of a small portico which offered several means of reaching the ground — pillars on one side, ivy on another, a convenient tree branch on still a third. I gazed about me, but, not surprisingly, saw nothing at all. Then I hurried back to report my findings, and sent the eager houseguests, now thronging the passage, and several footmen as well, out to search the grounds in all directions.

Jeffars was in the thick of things, exuding sympathy for the robbery victim. I was just in time to hear him saying solicitously, "She looks positively ill, don't you think? Come into my friend's room; he has a flask of whisky, a glass of it will do her good."

Once again my heart seemed to stop beating. Had he forgotten the raggedy clothes that would give us away, to say nothing of Lady Woolwentham's dressing gown? I followed them in at a signal from Jeffars, my heart in my feet.

I should have known better. The room was as natural as could be. There was my rumpled bed, my dinner clothes casually hung over a chair, nothing in view that would be amiss in the bedroom of any house guest.

It was here the police found us, as Jeffars was in the act of pouring out a glass of whisky for the Dowager. She did indeed look ill, on top of an obvious fury, and took the whisky at one gulp.

Ponicrest, the local police inspector, glanced only casually round the room. I had another uneasy moment when I saw that the wardrobe door was open, but a hasty peek reassured me that all there was to be seen was only what was to be expected — a spare suit of dinner clothes, country tweeds, and a travelling suit.

The police continued the search which the amateurs had begun, but had at last to admit failure.

"We'll do our best, Milady," Ponicrest said gloomily in the drawing room, "but I'm afraid there isn't much to go on. You say the safe is empty and your jewels are gone. I'd be more sanguine if you'd waited for us as you ought to have done," he added with faint reproach, which I suspect would have been far more direct and acerbic had he not been speaking to a Dowager Duchess, and a formidable one at that. "Any trail there might have been is so mucked about now, with your footmen and guests running all over the place, that it will be a difficult scent to pick up, if not impossible. Still," he sighed, "we'll try," and he took his leave.

"And now, Namby," said Jeffars, as one by one household and guests trailed off to their beds, "let us have some of your excellent whisky in your room before we too retire."

"Do you know," he exclaimed when we were safely away from other ears, "that temperamental old termagant refused her drops tonight, after all the fuss she made about them? No wonder she woke up!

"A clever touch, that open window, didn't you think?" he added carelessly.

Of course! I perceived then what I had been too dense or agitated to think of before. Jeffars, with his usual foresighted attention to the smallest detail, had opened the window before coming to my room, for just such an eventuality — to provide a plausible means of egress for the supposed burlars. As I continued to think it out, I grasped further subtleties to his plan — the search, organized by myself at his instruction, which would account for the inability of the police to find traces of the thieves. My admiration for my friend was never greater than at that moment.

"I did think you were taking an unnecessary risk to bring them in here," I said with some asperity. "There was much to give us away."

"My good Namby!" he said laughing. "I am only glad no one but myself was looking at you at that moment. That very thought was written all over your face. Don't you have more faith in me than that? I brought them in on purpose, to make it clear that we had nothing to hide, if any one indeed thinks anything about it afterward. You may be sure I took good care to conceal the revealing garments, including Milady's dressing gown, under your own clothes before I joined the party.

"Now for our reward for the night's proceedings. And I must congratulate you on a greater talent for intelligence and concealment than ever I suspected.

"Where are the jewels?"

I looked at him blankly.

"*I* haven't got them. *You* took them."

"But that is just what I didn't do, old chap. I got the safe open all right; really, they insult my intelligence with those flimsy locks. A child could have done it. *But it was empty!*

"I thought you were right after all, that the old lady was stubborn enough to keep on using her jewel case, and that you had got it from the dressing room."

Sadly I hung my head. Apparently I had had my chance for glory, and muffed it. "I never reached it," said I. "I was barely over the threshold when I heard her, and I fled. Besides, you had so ridiculed the idea that I didn't think it was worth the risk to take the additional time and steps to snatch it."

"Oh, well," Jeffars said philosophically, though I could see he was keenly disappointed, "we must take the bad with the good. At least we are still solid citizens in the eyes of society, and can try again.

"But —" a frown creased his forehead, "if we haven't the booty, neither does the old she-dragon. I'll swear that was no act; she was simply wild at her loss. I wonder," he added softly, and was lost in thought for a few minutes. Then he shrugged.

"Still," he said, "one small problem remains to us, and that is how to dispose of that infernal dressing gown you brought away with you." He reached into the wardrobe, fumbled under some of my clothes, and flung the bright pink satin garment on the bed.

To both our ears there came a tiny but unmistakeable sound of little clicks.

We gaped at each other, then Jeffars burst into laughter. "Namby, you did it after all! This time I am in your debt, without a doubt. That dear old thing, stubborn as a mule, wouldn't use her new safe that had been forced upon her, nor could she go on using the jewel box she had been warned against, so what *did* she do, like some little bourgeoise housewife bent on devising her own hiding place? She put 'em in the pocket of her dressing gown. No wonder she looked so sick!"

And he continued to shake with laughter as he thrust his hand into a pink satin pocket, and brought it out glittering with diamonds, including the fabulous pendant.

For my part, I have never known such pleasure. For though our ventures do fill me with dread, and there are times when I yearn to be the law-abiding citizen the world thinks me, I must own to larceny in my soul no less than Jeffars; for otherwise would I continue our peculiar partnership? I too feel the thrill of a successful coup.

But that was as nothing to the pleasure of it being *I,* Namby Runsden, who was the instrument of triumph that night. No matter that it was inadvertent. But for me, there would have been no diamonds to keep us in comfort the rest of that season. L.A. himself was well away on the wrong tack in going for the safe. He may continue to act superior at times, but since that night, there is a new edge of respect in his tone.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I don't suppose there can be a reader who failed to recognize the gentleman cracksman, A.J.

Raffles, in L.A. Jeffars, or his faithful Bunny in Namby. (Full anagram: Bunny Manders — Namby Runsden) I'm sure, too, that many Raffles devotees remember Dr. Theobald, who was used as a shield when Raffles was hiding from the police disguised as an invalid. He is referred to in this story as Dr. Aldobeth. Mount Street, the location of Bunny's flat, is here anagrammed to Otnum Street.

Other anagrams, for which the reader need not be familiar with Raffles lore:

Lady Woolwentham — wealthy old woman

Ruth Daggerand — granddaughter

Mona Picon — companion

Mortslade (the artist they were studying in the National Galley) — Old Master

Shetley Moat — Stately home

Ponicrest — Inspector

Oh, yes, it follows once again that the author, W.H. Guernon, must of course be the creator of one of literature's most beloved law-breakers, or an anagram of E.W. Hornung.

4

IF HANGMAN TREADS

by Norma Haigs

ON THE AFTERNOON that Collam-de Rure Art Galleries opened their ill-fated show, the young reporter, Blaine Haggett, found himself at liberty. He wanted very much to see this show, especially since his good friend Sylvester Dacoit — Latest Discovery of the London art world — was to be the featured artist.

Accordingly, by the time the painters, critics, dilettantes, and sherry were circulating in full swing, the newspaperman was pushing his way through them. At length he found a corner with a lesser density than the room at large. To his delight Thora Gatay was there. She was one of the best artists in England and a good friend as well.

"Thora!" he exclaimed. "How nice to see a familiar — and welcome — face in this mob!"

"What are you doing here?" she smiled. "I should have thought you'd be busy on more important news than an art exhibition."

"I just finished a big story and — what was that?"

"That" punctuated a groan that had come from behind a screen by which they were standing — a groan that had

been all but inaudible over the roar of the party.

Blaine walked behind the screen, followed by Thora Gatay. There they found a bearded individual shapelessly sprawled on the floor. He seemed to be trying to reach out, but the blood trickling from his forehead revealed his serious condition.

Blaine bent over and the man gasped, "Dora, Dor..." Then he shuddered and was silent.

"How bad is he?" asked Thora.

"Dead," Blaine replied briefly, and then, "Do you know him?"

"Tim Chivet," she answered. "Difficult person, but a good painter. It's murder, isn't it?"

The reporter nodded.

"But how very queer!" Thora was pale. "How did he get behind the screen? It's — it's impossible!"

But Blaine Haggett was already on his way through the oblivious crowd in search of a phone. At length he was able to talk to his good friend at Scotland Yard, and hear the reassuring news that he would come at once. After making another call, to his newspaper, Blaine returned to the corpse. Thora Gatay was still there, and he told her that Chief Detective Inspector Carroll Dikeyne was on his way.

She smiled at that. "He won't be best pleased to find me here." Blaine agreed, knowing that the Chief Inspector would rather keep his wife out of his cases — professionally, Mrs. Dikeyne used her own name, Thora Gatay.

Then Blaine made his way to the entrance of the gallery and instructed the doorman not to let anybody out until the police arrived. He also verified that no one had left since the gallery opened its doors — so the murderer

was still there.

It seemed an age, but was actually only ten minutes later when the tall man, looking more like an aristocratic client of the gallery than the famous detective he was, arrived with his staff. Dikeyne left Rex Forb, his indispensable assistant, to interview the doorman and prevent untimely exits, while he went with Blaine to examine the body.

"I don't know how you manage, Haggett, to be on the scene of so many crimes," Dikeyne remarked wryly.

"I'm not the only one," the young reporter rejoined. "Thora's here too."

The Chief Inspector's lean ascetic face, which has been likened to a monk's and a Spanish grandee's, tightened. Thora Gatay, watching them approach from across the room, thought for the thousandth time, but with joy undiminished, "He *does* have good bones." And she smiled the smile that never failed to turn his heart over.

"Fancy meeting *you* here," he said ironically, but the tone was tender. "However," he added in a more businesslike manner, "you can really be useful, as you must know something about this crowd."

Some time later, Dikeyne and Thora Gatay were sitting in the private office behind the exhibition room, where the noise of the crowd did not penetrate and distract. Blaine was effacing himself in a corner, hoping to go unnoticed and undismissed. Police routine had efficiently got under way. The crowd was being sorted and cleared. Those who had any known connection with the dead man would be kept for questioning, while others would give their names and addresses and depart, somewhat stunned at the brutal reality that had disturbed

their afternoon. The faithful and fiercely loyal Hobey and Lampiston — fingerprints and photography respectively — were performing their duties, and the doctor was waiting to examine the body. Forb was standing by his chief.

"Now," Dikeyne addressed his wife, "do fill me in on these people you told us to detain. Forb, old trooper, take notes — you know my filthy memory." Forb grinned at this familiar statement, knowing full well what a first-class memory Dikeyne possessed. "Haggett," the Chief Inspector threw out to the corner, "you know our usual arrangement. If you stay, your paper gets nothing without my prior approval."

Blaine agreed, and Gatay launched into her resume.

"Tim isn't — wasn't — popular, but he was a first-rate painter. He had a nasty way of sneering at others — especially at aspiring painters who hadn't the talent he had, or, in other instances, just finding an Achilles heel and jeering away at it. He had a paramour — a girl named Maura Orp, who sculpts atrociously. She's in this show, however — I think Tim somehow wangled it with Mr. de Rure."

"And with Tim's gift for antagonizing, if I may put it that way, do you know with whom, particularly, he may not have been on good terms?"

"He quarreled off and on with everyone he knew. That goes for Mr. de Rure at the gallery here, for Maura Orp, his mistress, for Sylvester Dacoit, his most important rival in the art world — and, for that matter, with me. There are plenty of others, but those are the only ones I've seen here this afternoon."

"And you say he found people's vulnerable spots and worked on those. Well, murder's been done for less. Do

you know what these people's Achilles heels are?"

"Not really," Thora answered, "outside of the usual artistic touchiness."

"One other question, and then we'll have a go at the suspects. How long were you by that screen before you discovered the body?"

"I've been puzzling about that, Carry. He *couldn't* have got there without my knowing it — yet he did. You know me and crowds. I did want to see the show, because several of my pupils are in it, so I got here before the doors were opened to the public. The doorman knows me and let me in. There wasn't a soul here then except Mr. de Rure, who was running around adjusting the angles of the paintings, and doing other useless fussing.

"I did go behind the screen for a moment, out of curiosity, and the space was empty then. Later I saw Tim come in, but the minute the room began to fill up I went to that corner and hadn't budged when Blaine found me. I would have seen anyone go behind that screen. I'm certain no one did — in fact, I'm sure all the visitors stayed right in the exhibition room in plain view. So I don't see how it was done."

"No more do I," replied her husband. "Let's go into the main room and have a look at the people."

They went into the gallery, the walls of which — now that most of the crowd had left — could be seen to be covered with an assortment of paintings. The general impression was of vigor, enthusiasm, and ability, but with some rough edges. Dikeyne repressed a shudder as he glanced at a prominent work of sculpture, and grinned at his wife. Then he turned his attention to the little group sitting more or less together, some with

sherry glasses still in their hands.

His eyes roved over the dapper, affluent-looking gentleman who could be no one but Mr. de Rure himself, half owner and managing partner of the gallery; the belligerently rumpled young giant who was probably Sylvester Dacoit, fair-haired new discovery; two other youngish men who were also aggressively and badly dressed and therefore also presumably artist-exhibitors; and lastly at the blonde, beatnik-type girl who had been the dead man's lady love, as well as the perpetrator of the offending sculpture.

The young woman leaped up when she saw him and waved her glass. "I know who you are," she cried. "You're Handsome Dikeyne! What's going on here?"

Dikeyne glared at Blaine Haggett, who had coined the loathsome appellation, and then turned his attention back to the suspects.

De Rure was the next to speak. "I'm glad it's you, Dikeyne. I've often sold paintings to your mother, and I'd much rather deal with your class, if I *must* have police in my gallery. But why must I? And why did your man send the others away and keep us? All we know is that there's been an accident. In *my* gallery," he muttered as an outraged afterthought. "And how is Lady Dikeyne these days?" he continued in an effort to link himself with the Chief Inspector and at the same time shut the others out.

Dikeyne, with his usual finesse, answered politely but in a professional tone which did not permit old acquaintance to presume on a police investigation.

"There's been a particularly nasty accident here this afternoon," he explained. "I know this is tiresome for all of you, and I don't like to inconvenience you, but there *has* been a murder, so we must investigate it. If

you'll all just answer one or two questions, perhaps we can clear this up swiftly."

He went first behind the screen, where he learned that the body had been photographed, that no fingerprints had been found, and that Chivet had died from a blow on the head, delivered while his assailant had been facing him. There could have been five to ten minutes between the time Chivet was struck and the time he expired, but no more. The fatal blow had evidently been preceded by a quarrel.

He also noted that there was a door behind the screen. He called de Rure over to ask him about the door, and was informed that it was never used, that it had been locked ever since he had taken over the gallery; he thought it led to his office. Dikeyne murmured something to Hobey, then returned to the others.

"Tim Chivet has been murdered here today, but before he died he mentioned Dora. Does anyone know whom he meant?"

A blank silence greeted this question. Finally Dacoit said doubtfully, "Could he have meant to say 'Maura'? If he was practically dead, his enunciation might not have been too clear."

"I like that!" shrilled the girl. "Listen to me, Sylvester Dacoit. I happen to know Tim had it in for you and was making you plenty uncomfortable. And it had something to do with a painting of yours called 'Doorway.'"

"Now, Maura." It was de Rure. "You needn't get hotheaded and start tattling. We know you're not a murderess. Not," he added almost under his breath, "that you didn't have good reason, the way Tim treated you."

"And you, Mr. de Rure," Dikeyne asked in his pleas-

ant voice, "did he give you good reason too?"

It was Maura who answered, still nettled. "I think he did. Tim hinted about it, but he wouldn't tell me what it was. He just said he could give de Rure a bad time. And 'de Rure' sounds sort of like 'Dora' too. For that matter," she sulked, annoyed probably because Dikeyne had failed to notice her charms, "I can see that you're sweet on Thora Gatay, but why is she any different from the rest of us? Tim was rough on all artists — and 'Thora' sounds like 'Dora' too."

"Miss Orp," Dikeyne replied, "I do indeed draw the line at suspecting my wife. At any rate, I believe I know who the murderer is, so I won't keep most of you much longer."

He glanced at Hobey, who nodded, then swung on the owner of the gallery. "Mr. de Rure, how did you get that scratch on your hand?"

"Why — uh — from a nail, while hanging canvasses for this show."

"I think not. I think with a microscope we'll find a connection between that scratch and the victim's fingernails."

"Tell me more, Mr. Dikeyne," sneered de Rure.

"Gladly. You told us the door behind the screen hadn't been used in years, but my man, checking at my direction, learned it has been used today. The victim must have reached the corner through that door, as there was no other way for him to get there without my wife seeing him.

"My wife told me something else of interest too — that no *visitor* passed through, either to or from your office. You alone are not a visitor. Now, obviously it must have been from your office that the body was

brought into the exhibition room, and that means you're the only person who could have done it.

"In addition, there was a struggle. Out here with the crowd a struggle would surely have been noticed, so it must have taken place privately — either in your office or before the main doors were opened. Again you and only you.

"You put the body in a public room in an attempt to divert suspicion. We know from Tim's unpleasant character and Maura's statement that he had some hold on you, so you decided to get rid of him." In his own mind Dikeyne also felt that if Chivet could have coerced de Rure into exhibiting Maura Orp's work, the hold must have been powerful indeed.

De Rure made a last protest. "Dora. I'm certainly not Dora, and de Rure does *not* sound like it."

"No," said Dikeyne. "I think Chivet was really calling attention to the place where he'd last seen his murderer, wanting someone to go after him. I think he was saying, 'Door . . . uh . . . door.'"

Then Chief Inspector Carroll Dikeyne added, "There was another clue, of course. Your name, Mr. de Rure, quite gives you away."

EDITORS' NOTE: Yes, indeed, Mr. de Rure's name quite gives him away. . . For by now you probably realize that the whole story is a trick, a bamboozle, a hoax, a veritable snare and delusion.

The very first clue to this artful dodging and homicidal hanky-panky was the title itself: If Hangman Treads *(fancy enough to be suspicious!) is an anagram, and it tells you from the start what to do* — Find the Anagrams.

The next clue was the author's name — but more of that later.

Then, in order of their appearance, every proper name in the story was an anagram — to wit:

Collam-de Rure = murder locale
Blaine Haggett = Nigel Bathgate
Sylvester Dacoit = Latest Discovery
Thora Gatay = Agatha Troy
Tim Chivet = the victim
Carroll Dikeyne = Roderick Alleyn
Rex Forb = Brer Fox
Hobey and Lampiston = Bailey and Thompson
Maura Orp = paramour
Mr. de Rure = murderer

A charming idea! — it fooled us completely. A pastiche of the Roderick Alleyn stories, complete with the famous Chief Inspector, his wife, staff, and the suspects in a murder case... We wonder if any such wholesale pastiche has ever been done before...

It is only fair to give you the author's real name. Her first name really is Norma, but her surname is Schier. To play ultra-fair with the reader, Mrs. Schier invented the name Haigs, substituted it for Schier, combined it with Norma — to make an anagram (the ultimate clue) of the name of "that delightful, incomparable authoress for whom this nonsense" (quoting from Mrs. Schier's letter) "is a token of my admiration — Ngaio Marsh."

5

THE TECCOMESHIRE FEN MYSTERY

by Cathie Haig Star

TECCOMESHIRE FEN, LATER to become the scene of the crime, was one of those sleepy English villages that the world usually passed by. My traveling companion and I had meant to do just that, but Fate had other plans. At least, I like to think it was Fate that brought my friend to that quiet town in time to see justice done.

We were returning from the north of England, where we had tracked down a desperate criminal — whom Scotland Yard had been fruitlessly trying to capture — and we were looking forward to telling our friend Carstone J. Pipp of Scotland Yard all about it when the motor of our car began to make ominous sounds, culminating in no sound at all.

We looked at each other baffled; crime solvers extraordinary we might be, but auto mechanics we were not. In the time-honored way of men who know nothing of the workings of engines, we lifted the hood and peered inside.

Just then a battered truck came by, slowed and halted. A handsome young blond giant alighted and came toward us.

"Trouble?" he asked. "Motors are my line."

"But how fortunate, m'sieu!" exclaimed my friend. "We have indeed the trouble! Look you, the motor will not go, after making the noises most strange."

The young giant looked, nodded sagely, and began to rummage in the back of his truck. From among a litter of tools, stained cloths, and spare parts, he extracted a hook and chain, by means of which he proceeded to fasten our vehicle to the rear end of his.

"I can put it right in an hour or two," he said. He towed us to the heart of the village, where a sign reading *Rikell's Garage* proclaimed our immediate destination, as well as the name of our rescuer.

We asked Rikell where we might find refreshment while awaiting the repairs, and he pointed down the street. "That's the Bugle Dolphins," he informed us. "They'll make you comfortable."

We took our leave and turned our steps toward this old English pub, to pass our time as best we could until the car should be ready. The street was utterly deserted, with not even a parked car to mar the vista to the little woods at the other end of the high street.

We were soon comfortably settled, and I smiled appreciatively at the charming barmaid who took our orders. When I caught my friend's eye I blushed with annoyance, for he insists that I am easy prey for every pretty girl. Still, this one *was* a lovely and enchanting-looking creature, not only blonde and blue-eyed, but with an air of sweetness as well. I said as much when she was out of earshot.

"Ah, Stangish," he twinkled at me, straightening an ashtray on the table that was slightly askew, "always the pretty girl, even if she has the soul of a murderess."

I was about to defend myself hotly, when the landlord, who, we discovered, was known as Dad Thornell to the regulars, brought us our drinks — the inevitable sirop for my friend and a whisky for me. We learned that the pretty girl was his niece and that her name was Gerryl Pitt.

Thornell joined us with a tankard of ale and seemed disposed to gossip further. His niece had evidently been fond of one Ted Hoby, not a local lad but a gentleman who occasionally put up at the pub and did some outdoor painting. For a while marriage banns had seemed to hover, and then, mysteriously, the two became cool to each other. At first Gerryl had seemed depressed, but lately had become more like her normal self. If she wasn't in high good spirits, at least she was contented.

"Strange," my friend murmured softly to himself, "to me she does not look contented."

I don't think Thornell heard, for at that moment several people burst into the pub in a state of considerable agitation, and it was some little time before we could learn what it was all about.

Eventually the leader of the excited men emerged as one Dr. Gillian Coaty, local dignitary, and at approximately the same time the cause of the excitement became apparent to us. Ted Hoby, erstwhile sweetheart of Miss Pitt, had been found in a clump of bushes nearby, shot through the heart! I looked quickly at the girl, who was visibly distressed.

My companion at once bounced into the middle of the commotion. "But how fortunate for you that I am here!" he said. "I am Pierre Choulot."

He did not amplify this statement, taking it for granted that everybody in England had heard of his

great detective prowess. His assumption that his pronouncement would produce awe made me, as on similar occasions, somewhat embarrassed for him. Small, with an egg-shaped head and enormous (some have said ridiculous) mustaches, the figure that my little Belgian friend cut was not as universally impressive as he persisted in thinking.

Still, he was not without his own kind of dignity and I could see that the local inhabitants viewed him with mixed emotions. Happily Dr. Coaty, who seemed to be more or less in charge, *had* heard of Choulot and was suitably enthralled.

"What a stroke of luck!" exclaimed the doctor. "Our chaps are good men, none better, but murder's not really in their line. We don't have crime in Teccomeshire Fen."

"But now, evidently, you do," murmured my friend. "But with me here we will solve it in two wiggles of a sheep's tail."

Dr. Coaty — who, it turned out, was also district police surgeon — telephoned the inspector of police in the large neighboring town, and then approached Choulot and me. "If you like, I can take you to the scene of the crime," he offered.

We assented eagerly, and were soon out on the still-deserted high street of Teccomeshire Fen and making our way to the small wood we had noticed earlier.

On the way the good doctor told us that he and some friends had discovered the crime while out walking, and that, as the body was still warm, the murder must have taken place only shortly before. His medical opinion was that about half an hour at most had elapsed since death.

Almost before we knew it we were gazing solemnly at

the dark, still figure sprawled out before us. Evidently the victim had been interrupted in the act of painting, for his palette was lying near him on the ground, brushes were scattered about, and the open paint box was propped up as if the artist were still using it.

"That's what's left of Ted Hoby," said Dr. Coaty. "He came here off and on to paint, but he hardly knew anyone here, except the girl at the pub. I can't understand who would have killed him."

"Aha!" exclaimed Choulot. "But that gives us two suspects — the girl in love and her uncle-guardian. Who knows what motives we may find, *hein*?"

At that moment the Carlston police arrived in the person of their local inspector. To my delight he too had heard of Choulot, so once again we could be right in with the police in a murder investigation. This chap proved to be a prim, fussy fellow, but only too grateful to have an expert on the scene. I only hoped my old friend wouldn't disappoint him, for he has sometimes seemed to me less than thorough in exploring physical clues.

Together we all studied the body of Ted Hoby. We noted that the bullet had cleanly penetrated the heart, that the body was sprawled on its back, as if, when the bullet struck, Hoby had fallen backward off the camp stool, which was still standing. A search of the dead man's pockets revealed a few pound notes, some loose change, a handkerchief, and a penknife. The dry ground yielded no footprints, and a search of the area produced no further clues.

Choulot, I am sorry to say, paid little attention to all this; instead, he seemed absorbed in the artist's equipment. He pored over the paintbox, although it seemed to me that the box held nothing unusual — just the or-

dinary collection of paints, brushes, cups for oil and turpentine, bottles of these liquids, and a palette knife. Choulot also scrutinized the brushes scattered about, feeling and even sniffing them. He solemnly reported that they smelled faintly of turpentine! He touched the canvas and palette, and announced that these were partly dry and partly sticky.

"Which strikes you as significant?" I asked him.

"But of course!" he said. "It leaps to the eye — that the brushes are clean."

I was puzzled, for it seemed to me that the cleanliness of the brushes was hardly a clue. Even if Choulot were suggesting that Hoby had only just started to paint, I couldn't see how this knowledge advanced us.

The expression on the face of the inspector indicated that he shared my opinion, but that he was too polite to say so. To me, however, he muttered, "Old boy getting on in years, what?"

Finally Choulot was satisfied with his examination of the painting paraphernalia, and the inspector also felt we had learned all we could for the time being, so we returned to the pub. Here the inspector took over a small private room for questioning.

Miss Pitt was first. With an admirably straightforward air, she told us about herself and Hoby — how they had fallen in love some time ago, but how his unreasonable jealousy had driven an ever-widening wedge between them.

"But, look you, mademoiselle," burst out Choulot, "if *you* were lying dead in the wood, or another handsome young man, the jealousy, it might explain much. As it is, it does not explain why the jealous man himself is the dead one."

For this she had no explanation. In answer to Choulot's inquiry as to whether she was now in love with someone else, she replied that this was not the case — that the village of Teccomeshire Fen did not abound with eligible suitors. However, in answering Choulot's question there had seemed to be just a shade of hesitation in her manner.

As to the events of the day, she told us that Hoby had motored up in the morning, booked a room, and gone out at once to paint. He had returned for luncheon, after which she had gone out — therefore, she hadn't seen him leave in the afternoon. However, we were able to reason that he had gone back to painting, and, since the brushes were clean and the paint almost dry, he had just commenced when his killer intervened.

"Dad" Thornell was next, but he could add little that we didn't already know. Choulot had only one question to ask him.

"Monsieur Thornell," he inquired, "what vehicles are there on the premises?"

"Only mine," replied the landlord, obviously puzzled. He looked out the window as if to make sure — at the courtyard and grounds, which, as he had said, were innocent of vehicles. He explained that there was a garage in the rear which could hold only one car, and that his car was now in it.

"That is all I needed to know," Choulot pronounced with a satisfied air. "I see Monsieur Rikell has arrived in the public room — no doubt to tell us our own car is ready. Let us join him."

The inspector could not stifle a reproof at this point, and I did not blame him. "Monsoor Choulot," said he stiffly, "murder is serious business, and I for one have

no time for gossiping at the bar."

"Ah, do you think Papa Choulot is not serious? But most assuredly I am. We go now to unmask the murderer. Come."

"Choulot!" I cried. "Do you really know who the killer is?"

"Mais oui," he announced calmly. "But do you not know also? You have but to use order and method, like myself. Come, *mon ami,* employ the little gray cells."

With that he approached Rikell, and then turning to the Inspector he said, "Here is your man."

I was sure then that Choulot had indeed lost his grip. All of us, Rikell included, were dumfounded. "But yes," the little Belgian went on, not heeding our disbelief. *"Sacré,* is it not obvious? There are four glaring pointers.

"One: Monsieur Hoby motors up to the pub. Very well, where is his car? Not on the empty street, either here or by the woods, nor yet on the grounds. Elsewhere in the village? But he knows no one, except mademoiselle and the landlord. Where more likely than in the village garage?

"Two: the victim paints in the morning, cleans his brushes, and comes back for lunch. Where is the rag with which he wiped his brushes? Not on the scene of the crime. Then the murderer has taken it, probably to wipe paint off his hands.

"I think, you know, it is the murderer who sets things up in the afternoon. Hoby takes his car to the local garage — he needs repairs, or he wants to speak to Rikell about Mademoiselle Pitt. A quarrel ensues and Rikell kills him there. He takes the body back to the woods to avert suspicion, and sets up the paints for the

same reason. I suspect that in the process he gets paint on himself and uses a rag conveniently lying among the paraphernalia to remove it. Then, being a mechanic to whom wiping himself off is automatic, he does the automatic thing — he tosses the rag in his truck — where we saw it!"

At that moment Rikell's face more than confirmed Choulot's statements. The reminder of the telltale rag in his truck completely undermined his defenses.

"I love Gerryl," he said dully. "I told that bloody swine so, and he went for me. He had a gun in his hand, but I got it away from him and shot him."

"The third point," continued Choulot when Rikell had been taken away, "was that the case needed a handsome young man to complete the picture. Love was dying between Mademoiselle Pitt and Monsieur Hoby, and whatever she says, she is bound, with her pretty face, to find consolation. And she was not convincing, decidedly not, when she said there was no one."

"I'll know better than to try to deceive you another time, Monsier Choulot," laughed Gerryl. "I was afraid to mention it, and our friendship is so new I was sure the village hadn't learned about it. But that is only three points. What is the fourth, or is that to remain a mystery?"

"Aha!" twinkled Choulot. "That is no mystery. His name, mademoiselle — his name told me at the very beginning that Rikell was a killer."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Well, Mrs. Norma Schier (to use her real name) has (who)dunit again! As you no doubt guessed, The Teccomeshire Fen Mystery *is an anagrammatic pastiche-parody of our old and good friend, Her-*

cule Poirot. And again the anagrams are multitudinous.

Of course Choulot knew the identity of the killer from the beginning — "Rikell" and "killer" are anagrams. There is another tipoff at the beginning: in the first sentence of the story we are told that Teccomeshire Fen was "later to become the scene of the crime." And no wonder! — "Teccomeshire Fen" and "scene of the crime" are anagrams.

Others? How many did you spot?

Pierre Choulot = Hercule Poirot
Stangish = Hastings
Carstone J. Pipp = Inspector Japp
Bugle Dolphins = old English pub
Ted Hoby = the body
Dad Thornell = the landlord
Gerryl Pitt = pretty girl
Dr. Gilliam Coaty = local dignitary
Carlston police = local inspector

As the author herself informed us, "By now it is abundantly obvious that the one and only Agatha Christie, grande dame of mystery fiction, is the spirit behind this nonsense," which (again quoting the author) is Mrs. Schier's "sincere tribute to Agatha Christie and a token of my admiration."

But, as Mrs. Schier concluded (and who says that women do not have the first and last word?), "Take another look at the name of the author of The Teccomeshire Fen Mystery."

Cathie Haig Star = Agatha Christie

6

HOCUS-POCUS AT DRUMIS TREE

by Handon C. Jorricks

FOR THE FIRST time in a week Guy Moran Caine wasn't marveling at finding himself in London. Instead, he was marveling at a young lady. She was one of a party at the next table at the Drumis Tree, a restaurant which the guidebook had rightfully told Guy he would find delightful — though it could hardly have anticipated his reasons.

The young American couldn't have said why he found so enchanting someone he didn't even know, but there it was. In addition to a vibrant beauty which reached him all too clearly at the next table, there was something in her smile, both warm and exciting, that made him feel he simply had to meet her.

He was not so approving of her behavior toward the good-looking young man on her left, a behavior which seemed altogether too friendly. It was no part of Guy's rapidly forming dream that she should be in love with someone else. He observed them toast each other with the wine that the waiter had just poured — champagne, Guy thought it was. They put their heads together for a moment, and then exchanged glasses.

The girl had barely sipped hers when she gasped and stared, horrified, at her companion. He had slumped over the table, oddly inert.

As Guy watched, a little man with a goatee and a fussy manner rose from his place at the young man's left and bent over him. He seemed to study the young man closely, then he straightened and said something in a low voice to the other three people at the table.

Guy, who was frankly straining his ears, caught the words *dead, poison,* and *police.* Then the little man gave the girl a queer look and said something that Guy couldn't catch at all, but her color drained completely.

The others at the table — an immoderately gorgeous woman and a rather nondescript, rumpled-looking man — were staring at his beloved in a way Guy didn't care for. They edged away from her and huddled at the other side of the table.

Guy felt his blood boil. Without stopping to think, he stormed over to the neighboring table. "Look here," he blurted out to her, ignoring the others, "let me help. You must think I'm crazy," he added, "but I can see there's trouble and you need someone to stand by you."

"Galahad and the damsel in distress," murmured the little man in a suave voice, tinged with a foreign accent. "My dear sir, I think we can handle our own affairs without help from a total stranger," and turning to the girl he said pointedly, "Can't we, Melissa, my dear?"

She hesitated, then flung up her head. "No," she said clearly and firmly. "I don't know who he is, but it's good of him, and perhaps some objectivity is just what we *do* need."

She turned to Guy, who refrained from pointing out that objectivity was not what he was offering. "I'm

awfully grateful. I'm Melissa St. Dinserd, and this" — indicating the little man with the goatee — "is my guardian, M. Druerre. Over there is Ramora Glussot, and her agent, Herr Girden. There's been talk all week about their making a movie together — my guardian to finance it, and Ramora to star. They want — wanted —" She broke off and looked at the dead man, "They wanted *him* to be in it too."

Ramora Glussot! No wonder the other woman seemed more gorgous than life — she was *the* glamorous star of French films. He could only put down his initial lack of recognition to the magic of Melissa, which for Guy obscured all else.

He told Melissa his name, still ignoring the others beyond a curt nod when they were introduced, and steered her to his own table.

"What kind of friends and guardian have you?" he demanded. "It looked as if they were accusing you of murder."

It never entered his bewitched head that she might in fact be a murderess. Even when he had been a table away, he had felt that she radiated honesty and decency, along with her other more physical qualities.

"I'd better explain," she said, biting her entrancing lower lip. "I can't blame them for wondering. He — the d-d-dead man — is — was — Peter Osch. He seems to have been poisoned — in the champagne, the glass smells of it — and we had just switched glasses. Besides, his glass was between him and me. No one else could have given him poison. They think I doctored my glass and then asked him to change, but actually it was he who suggested changing glasses. I don't see how it was done, but I certainly didn't do it."

"Of course not," Guy said with such heat that she

stared at him, and a flush crept along her cheeks. "He must have taken it himself."

"But it doesn't make sense," she frowned. "He's not the suicidal type, I'm sure. Anyhow, I used to know him rather well" (Guy winced) "and we talked sometimes about suicide — in the idle way one does, what methods one would or wouldn't use. He always said poison was not for him — he knew too many instances of people who'd been pulled through."

For some time Guy had been disturbed by the vague sensation of people hovering about them, a sensation enhanced, now that he came to think of it, by the odor of an evil-smelling pipe. This was now followed by a low but penetrating rumble that would have done credit to the foghorn of a transatlantic liner.

"Lordloveaduck," this voice thundered, "who in blue blazes are you?"

Guy's glance reluctantly left the girl and traveled upward. It alighted first on the companion of the speaker, a mild, stolid-looking man carrying a neat bowler. Next, his gaze went to the speaker himself, lingering in fascinated and delighted disbelief. He took in the bald head, the prominent abdomen, the disreputable suit, the whole improbably-put-together and fiercely scowling individual whom (next to Melissa, of course) he most wanted to meet in all England — and certainly at this moment most urgently needed.

"You're Sir Marvin Rhyerlee!" he exclaimed. "My father raised me on tales of you — and I always thought he was exaggerating." (In spite of the tension, he couldn't help smiling.) "You're the man who solves impossible problems. Well, there's an impossible murder right here."

"Well. Now." The gentleman in question allowed himself to be mollified. "I'm the Old Man, all right. I'm

the one they come to when they're stuck, and laugh at the rest of the time. Even you, son, I saw it! But burn me," he roared, his wrath returning, "what's going on here, and why can't I have a peaceable lunch like any peaceable citizen, without something always going wrong?"

"Peaceable" was somehow the last word Guy would have used in connection with Sir Marvin Rhyerlee, but he let it pass. Before he knew it, they were all being ushered into a private room — M. Druerre, Herr Girden, and Mlle. Glussot, as well as Melissa and himself. Sir Marvin's luncheon companion turned out to be Inspector Starmes of the C.I.D., who promptly took charge of the investigation.

When they were comfortably settled, Guy explained to Sir Marvin and Starmes how he had become involved. A reminiscent chuckle rumbled out of Sir Marvin when Guy gave his name. "Sure, son, I remember your dad. Those were great times we had in America."

"So he said," Guy commented drily. "But even though I've barged into something that wasn't my business, it looked to me as if this crowd was ready to pin a murder on this young lady, just like that. I ask you, does she look like a murderess?"

"We-e-ell," said Rhyerlee, "lotsa murderers don't. Ask Starmes here. Just the same, it's a pretty fast conclusion to jump to. I think," he looked hard at Druerre, "we ought to hear more."

"Of course, m'sieu, of course." The little man with the goatee was all cooperation. "Peter Osch was my ward, as is Melissa St. Dinserd. They are not related to me, nor, for that matter, to each other — otherwise, they could not have been affianced, as they were."

Melissa made a protesting sound, but M. Druerre continued, unheeding. "Young Osch has been in Africa for a few years, and has only been back in England a few days. Today was the great day of his life — when he came of age — and we were celebrating his birthday. But he was out of touch — we were his only acquaintances in England, and he hardly knew Mlle. Glussot and he only met Herr Girden this morning. It would not make sense for them to take his life. But the young lady here — I do not like to say it, but she is of a hot temper, and she sat next to the wine glass. I can only suppose that they had a — what do you call it? — a lover's quarrel."

"Steady, sir," Starmes cut in affably. "The young lady switched drinks with the gentlemen, didn't she? Just so. Didn't it occur to you that perhaps someone might have been trying to poison *her,* and because of a romantic notion of the young man's, the murderer got the wrong victim?"

A strangled sound came from Melissa. "Murder me!" Her voice had a queer pitch, but she spoke steadily enough. "Oh, no! But for the record," she flashed in a different tone, "I was *not* engaged to him. (Guy felt as if a great weight had been lifted from his chest.) We once had some sort of childhood notion, but it was never definite, and we hadn't seen each other for a long time. As you heard, he's only been back in this country a few days. I am quite heartwhole and fancy free," she added firmly, and Guy almost stood up and danced a jig.

"But, mademoiselle," purred Mlle. Glussot, "he did *want* to marry you, did he not? *Le pauvre enfant* told me all about you when we met this noon, and he had such high hopes." Her eyes were twinkling. "Do you

know what he told me? That my friend had actually given him a drug that would make you fall in love with him."

"Miss Glussot!" Starmes couldn't contain himself. "Do you expect us to believe that?"

"*Cherie,* you must have misunderstood," M. Druerre added suavely.

The famous movie star shrugged her beautiful shoulders. "That is what he said. An imaginative type — that young man."

"It's just possible," said Melissa thoughtfully. "He believed in all kinds of crazy nonsense — black magic, voodoo, things like that. Give anyone a little time to win his confidence, and they could probably make him believe anything."

"But why?" Starmes asked. "Herr Girden, you have a bizarre sense of humor."

"*Ach, nein!*" came the angry protest. "I did no such thing. Ramora, where did you get such a crazy idea?"

Guy's wits had sharpened remarkably when Melissa had said she was fancy free, and suddenly he had a brainstorm. "Look here," he said, unaware that he was shouting, "the guilty person must be this German chap. If Miss St. Dinserd was the intended victim, Girden might have handed Osch a poison to give to her under pretense of this claptrap. He was sitting next to her — on her other side — so he might even have done it himself. Maybe," he added wildly, "It's a plot between the beautiful Frenchwoman and the sinister German. One of them's lying about this love potion business — that we know."

"Looky here, son." Rhyerlee took Guy aside. "Girden didn't put poison in the gal's glass. Fact is," he

muttered, "Starmes and I had our eyes on Girden for other reasons. That's why we were here — Starmes wanted me to get a look at him. We never took our eyes off him, and I personally can vouch for the fact that he put nothing in any drink. Besides, Starmes has had him tailed all week, and it's true that he never met the boy until this morning."

"Wait," said Guy, "I've got it. We only have M. Druerre's word that the poison was in the drink. Maybe it was in the food — and he poisoned the drink later to confuse the trail. Or maybe Osch took vitamins and they were doctored."

"Say, son," Sir Marvin boomed, "you got possibilities."

Starmes was listening with one ear while he received a report from one of his men with the other. Dismissing his man, he said, "Clever, all right. But Osch didn't take pills — none were found on him, nor a container. My man just told me. And besides, the food doesn't smell of cyanide, which it looks like he died of — but the drink does. We'll have to wait for medical and laboratory reports to be certain, but unofficially I'd stake my shirt on it that he was poisoned in the champagne. And that," he added, "seems to wash out all the possibilities."

Starmes turned to Marvin Rhyerlee. "Unless, sir, you can think of something?"

The sweetly polite question was not without irony, born of long and frustrating experience. The Old Man was a master at providing explanations in situations where Starmes could have sworn that no explanations were possible.

"Why, sure, son." Rhyerlee was doing it again.

"Meantersay you haven't tumbled to it? I don't know how you're going to pin it on him, but here's your man." And he pointed to M. Druerre.

"This is an outrage!" The Frenchman was furious. "Why should I kill Miss St. Dinserd?"

"Won't wash, son." Rhyerlee sounded tired. "You don't hocus me with that one. It ain't Miss St. Dinserd who's dead. It's Peter Osch, and that's just who you meant it to be. As to why — I daresay you've been monkeying with the young man's estate while he was too far away in Africa to know about it. Maybe that's how you raised the money to finance a movie for this particularly expensive star. Starmes can find out easy enough. I expect you felt threatened with exposure when Osch came back *and* became of age to manage his own affairs."

"Yes, you will find out," said Druerre, who seemed suddenly to have lost a lot of his bustle. "But I couldn't have killed my ward. I was nowhere near his glass."

"That was the diabolically clever part," Sir Marvin admitted. "You got the boy to commit his own murder. Mlle. Glussot's 'friend,' who sold him a lot of bunkum about a love drug, was you. And you also gave Osch something to take himself, didn't you? — 'to be equal to the flaming love of his sweetheart.' And of course you suggested that he switch glasses, so he could dope 'em both — so that we would get on another wrong track, if we didn't fall for Miss St. Dinserd as the murderess. Only it wasn't a love drug, of course. What you gave him for Miss St. Dinserd was harmless, but for himself it was poison."

Druerre sagged, but he made a final effort. "*If* you are right about the method, Melissa, or even Ramora or Girden, could have done it."

"That's where you're wrong, son," said Sir Marvin. "Aside from the fact that your motive sticks out a mile, the gal couldn't have spun him that moonshine about a love potion to affect *her.* As for Herr Girden, he only met him this morning — so there's no motive — and if it weren't for Mademoiselle we'd never have known about the drug. She wouldn't have told us if she'd killed him, and there's no other way he *could* have been killed.

"And that ain't quite all, son," M.R. finished quietly. "That monicker of yours labels you the murderer anyhow."

EDITORS' NOTE: Yes, as M.R. said, M. Druerre's monicker labels him the murderer...For once again the author, whose real name is Mrs. Norma Schier, is up to her anagrammatical tricks. Once again she has converted every proper name in the story (except London and England) into an anagram. To wit:

M. Druerre = murderer
Guy Moran Caine = young American
Melissa St. Dinserd = damsel in distress
Peter Osch = the corpse
Ramora Glussot = glamorous star
Herr Girden = red herring (a cute one!)
Drumis Tree = murder site
Starmes = (Chief Inspector) Masters (of the C.I.D.)
Marvin Rhyerlee = Henry Merrivale

And the supposed author's name — Handon C. Jorricks (a wonderful anagram!) — is of course (to quote from Mrs. Schier's note) "the Old Man's creator, master of the impossible situation, and a far wilier plotter than my anagrammatic 'pastiche' does justice to — none other than John Dickson Carr."

7

DYING MESSAGE

by Leyne Requel

THE SHRILLING OF the telephone in a certain Manhattan apartment disturbed the slumbers of three people. It was Jandu, the houseboy, who struggled into wakefulness to answer it, and even he was without his customary cheerfulness as he groped for the offending instrument.

A voice spoke urgently from the other end, but Jandu was firm. No, he could not disturb Mr. Requel. The voice urged some more, and then the phone was taken gently from Jandu by Leyne Requel himself. That gentleman, minus his pince-nez, listened intently, startled wide-awake by what he heard. He reached for pad and pencil, scibbled down an address and directions, and was soon racing into his clothes, heedless of a protesting Jandu. The third sleeper, Requel's father, merely rolled over when the phone rang, and so did not hear the story until later . . .

The sun had just risen over the sleeping village of Scundermere when Leyne drove through at an indecent pace toward the lake. He screeched to a halt by a signpost, consulted his notes, and hurried on as fast as the

dirt road permitted. Spying a hunting lodge through the trees, Leyne pulled into the dirt track, jumped from his car, and headed for the door of the lodge.

A State Trooper stopped him, and he was still trying to persuade that doughty individual to let him in when the local Chief of Police, hearing heated voices, came out.

"What is it, Oattes?" he asked.

"Sir," replied Trooper Porter Oattes, young pride of the State Police, "this feller wants to butt in."

Leyne hastened to explain. "I'm Leyne Requel —"

"Say no more," exclaimed the Chief. "I used to work with your old man on the New York police force. I'm Carson Pellicot, and I'm proud to know you. Oattes, this is a good man to have around." To Leyne he said, "C'mon in. I'll fill you in if you like — or do you know all about it?"

"All I know," said Leyne, "is that an old friend called me in the wee hours of the morning and said he'd be arrested for murder if I didn't do something pronto. So here I am. I don't know a thing."

"Hmmm," said Pellicot. "Would your friend be Spence Cuttinson, by any chance?" Leyne's expression was all the confirmation he needed, and the Chief went on thoughtfully. "I don't see what you can do. Cuttinson *must* have done this killing. We found his footprints — and only his — where the murder was committed. *And* he was the one who 'found' the body out in the summerhouse, on his way to do some pre-dawn fishing. *He* says. And if that ain't enough, the victim wrote out Cuttinson's initials before he died. Looks to me like that clinches it."

"Who else was here?"

"Only the owner of this place, Kit Heller — he's a theatrical producer — and the man who was killed, Vic Hemitt, a shady lawyer from New York."

"Where are Heller and Spence now?"

"Cuttinson is in the kitchen. Heller took off. I know," Pellicot raised a hand. "It looks suspicious, but Heller left a note saying something important had come up and he'd be back. He could have got a phone call, though no one heard any. But that's not the point. The point is —"

"Hi, Leyne," interrupted a tragic voice from the doorway. Leyne looked and could not believe his eyes. Spence Cuttinson was normally a bouncing individual whose spirit was never dampened. Evidently, however, suspicion of murder had worked a change. Now he was haggard, and even his voice was a hollow mockery.

"The trouble," Spence said wearily, "is that Hemitt seems to have accused me in his last moments. I don't understand it, and I can't explain it."

Leyne was thinking furiously. "How are you so sure," he asked Pellicot, "that some unknown person didn't come along and do it?"

The Chief of Police sighed. "There's a small summer-house out back, a one-room affair with one door and two windows. The ground around it is so muddy that no one can get near it without leaving prints. Well, we can see where Hemitt went out to it — to the door — but no one else went anywhere near the door. There was one set of tracks up to each window, and I'll swear both sets were made by different pairs of shoes — but *both* pairs belong to your friend."

"The awful thing," Spence cut in, "is that I think so, too. I did make the tracks going up to the window on the

side nearest the house. That's when I went for a fishing rod I'd left out there. When I saw the light I went up to the window to see what was going on. I could tell at a glance that Hemitt was dead, and alone, and I could see the bullet hole, so I came back and called the police. I didn't want to go in and touch anything, or walk around outside, for fear of messing up clues. Little did I realize," he concluded wryly, "where the clues I was so careful to preserve were going to point!"

"And," said the Chief, "there's another set of prints going up to the other window, and a spent cartridge on the ground outside. The murderer went up to that window and shot his victim through it, all right, and I'd take my oath he was standing in Cuttinson's shoes at the time. We found that pair by the back door of the lodge, and your friend identifies 'em, but says he wasn't *in* 'em. I've sent casts of the prints, along with the shoes, to the lab, but I don't think there's much question. Your friend's guilty as sin."

Seeing the protest in Leyne's eye, the Chief added, "Yes, Heller's about the same size and weight as Cuttinson, and he *could* have pinched the shoes and worn 'em to divert suspicion. But that don't explain the initials the victim wrote when he was dying."

"Couldn't Heller have gone in through the window and written the initials himself?" asked Leyne.

"No, sir. That window was stuck — open a slit, just enough to poke a gun muzzle through. The other window ain't been opened for years. You can take it from me, it was Hemitt that wrote *SC.*"

Leyne's silver eyes narrowed. "Let's try another tack. What was the connection between these people, and why would someone want to kill Hemitt?"

"Blackmail," Pellicot answered promptly.

"Oh, come," Leyne exclaimed. "Don't ask me to believe that Cuttinson has a guilty secret, too! Spence, old pal, what have you been up to? What are you doing with this crowd, anyhow?"

"That's simple enough," replied Cuttinson. "I know Heller only slightly, but I have a client who's making a deal with him to back a show he's planning to produce. Hemitt was Heller's lawyer, and he asked us both to come up here and work out some of the details of the contract. I thought I'd get in some fishing, too. Hah!

"But I'll tell you this. If I didn't know that Hemitt wrote my initials after he was shot — and he *couldn't* have thought it was I outside the window; there's no earthly reason — I'd say now that Heller set up this whole weekend to frame me for the killing. Since the motive's supposed to be blackmail, it wouldn't prove anything if they can't show a connection between me and the dead man."

"Not much doubt about the blackmail," Pellicot said. "Hemitt's room was searched, but I mean thoroughly, by someone looking for something. We've searched, too, and didn't find anything, so I guess Cut — the murderer found what he was looking for."

"Right," said Leyne. "But Hemitt could just as easily have been blackmailing Heller, who could have searched the room while Spence was asleep.

"Spence has a spotless reputation," Leyne went on. "I've never known him to say or do anything dishonest. Therefore, I'm going on the premise that he didn't do this and is telling the truth. That means there's another explanation for those initials — there must be."

He hoisted his lean frame out of the chair. "Well," he

said, with more cheerfulness than he felt, "I'd like to have a look at those confounded initials."

Chief Pellicot accompanied him, leaving Oattes in charge. The two men made their way to the summerhouse, a small structure a few hundred yards from the lodge.

On the way Leyne inspected the footprints, now added to by the boots of the State Police. They told precisely the story he had heard.

The summerhouse still contained the unpleasant spectacle of the dead man. He might have been an unprepossessing figure in life, but in death he was pitiful. Slumped in a chair that had been drawn up to the table, his body faced the slightly open window away from the house, his head twisted toward the other window, so that the bullet hole in the forehead was clearly visible from the spot where Spence said he had discovered the crime.

Hemitt had apparently spent his last moments before the shooting without any suspicion of danger. He had come out to the summerhouse equipped with a crossword puzzle, which he was about two-thirds through, and at the side of the table was a book. It seemed more than likely that he had made an appointment to meet someone out here, and had provided himself with amusements until the other person should appear.

The pencil with which Hemitt had been doing the puzzle had dropped to the floor, but what he had written last was not part of the crossword. A large *SC* had been irregularly scrawled across the diagram, and it certainly looked like the shaky writing of a dying man.

"Well, Mr. Requel," asked the Chief, "what do you think?"

"I admit it *looks* incriminating," agreed Leyne, "and

the meeting in the summerhouse implies a certain secrecy. But logic dictates that there must be another explanation for the *SC.* Hemitt must have had a good idea of who might murder him — the person he had an appointment with — but my conclusion is that he tried to leave a clue that would escape the murderer's notice, or that the murderer wouldn't understand."

They were interrupted by some State Troopers who had come to remove the body. One of the Troopers had two reports to make. First, the lab had declared positively that the shoes and the footprints matched; second, the New York police (in the person of none other than Steve Geileran — Leyne's father's right-hand man), stated that Vic Hemitt was a known blackmailer.

"Look, Mr. Requel," Chief Pellicot said, not without reluctance, "I've got to arrest your friend unless you can give me some other reason for those initials."

"Let me have an hour," Leyne urged. "One hour more or less won't matter."

Pellicot agreed, and they walked to the door. Leyne spotted two men hanging about behind the trees. He jerked his head toward them, eyebrows raised in question. Pellicot said, "Names are Ferdinand Arcey and Dean F. Belmer. They ain't suspects — we know where they were all last night — but they're involved in some way. I can't make out how, and they won't say a word, but I'm sure they're partners in crime."

With this Pellicot departed, while Leyne settled himself in the summerhouse for a siege of concentrated thinking. He sat at the table, his chin propped on his hand. Absently he nibbled his knuckle. The minutes ticked by.

He glanced idly at the part of the crossword with which Hemitt had evidently spent his last moments on

earth. A six-letter horizontal word meaning "weapon" appeared to be the last word filled in. Vertically, the definition — numbered *50* — was "a set of implements or tools," in three letters.

Leyne shook his head and examined the book. It was called *Scenes of India,* and his eyebrows rose. The title began with *SC.* Hemitt might have meant to write more before he died. Leyne inspected the book minutely, but he found nothing helpful.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet. How blind he had been!

He hurried back to the lodge. Spence Cuttinson looked up with a ghost of hope in his eyes, the Chief with curiosity and skepticism.

"Pellicot," Leyne asked triumphantly, "what's a three-letter word meaning 'a set of implements or tools'?"

A look crossed the old Chief's face that has crossed the faces of other men who do not know Leyne Requel well. Cuttinson managed to say in a strangled voice, "Do you mean 'kit'?"

Leyne beamed. "Exactly! Isn't that the first name of our elusive host, Kit Heller? It's also the crossword clue Vic Hemitt was working on when the murderer cut his puzzling short. *And it's number fifty down!*

"You still don't see? If a dying man tried to write *50,* but scrawled it so shakily that it trailed off before he finished, it might well look like *SC.*

"And, you know," Leyne concluded with a smile, "it just had to be Kit Heller."

"What do you mean?" asked Cuttinson.

"Why, Kit Heller is the perfect name for the killer."

EDITOR'S NOTE — CHALLENGE TO THE READER: An old proverb, elaborated on by Plutarch and Thucydides, tells us that history repeats itself. A true variation — thus giving us a new proverb — is that mystery repeats itself. So here is Mrs. Norma Schier (to use her real name again) pulling the wool over our eyes again.

In the August 1965 issue of EQMM, *Mrs. Schier, under the author's name of Norma Haigs, presented us with a story titled* If Hangman Treads; *and the entire story, including the title, the author's name, and every proper name in the story itself, was an anagrammatic pastiche of Ngaio Marsh's Roderick Alleyn stories.*

In the November 1965 issue of EQMM, *Mrs. Schier, under the anagrammatic disguise of Cathie Haig Star, offered us* The Teccomeshire Fen Mystery, *a wholesale pastiche-parody of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot stories — and again every proper name in the story was a tell-tale anagram.*

Then in the April 1966 issue of EQMM *came* Hocus-Pocus at Drumis Tree, *signed as by Handon C. Jorricks — this time a grand-scale anagrammatic pastiche of John Dickson Carr's Sir Henry Merrivale (H.M.) stories.*

And now, number four —

Leyne Requel = Ellery Queen

and if "the killer" and "Kit Heller" (perfect name for "the killer" indeed!) is the only anagram that Leyne Requel himself spotted, the great detective is indeed slipping. Once again all the proper names in the story are anagrams — but, of course, you knew that all along, didn't you? For example:

Scundermere = murder scene

Porter Oattes = State Trooper

Carson Pellicot = local Inspector
Spence Cuttinson = innocent suspect
Vic Hemitt = the victim
Jandu = Djuna
Steve Geileran = Sergeant Velie

There were other clues too — a plenitude of give-aways. This addendum is headed CHALLENGE TO THE READER *— a phrase coined by Ellery Queen, and a hallmark of both E.Q. the author and E.Q. the detective. The title of the story,* Dying Message, *is a creative approach which, if not invented by Ellery Queen, certainly has become one of Queen's trademarks, and is more associated with E.Q. than with any other mystery writer. And the use of the same name for both the author and the detective also points inescapably to Ellery Queen, the only modern mystery writer who uses this double device.*

And still that is not all. Mrs. Schier has added a bonus of two clues — which, if you unscrambled them, earn you a special commendation. Remember those two silent, skulking characters in the story revealingly called "partners in crime"? — Ferdinand Arcey and Dean F. Belmer. Anagrams again, and two red herrings standing for the two creators of Ellery Queen — Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee to whom, in Mrs. Schier's own words, she "is enormously indebted; they have won my undying gratitude for reading pleasure these many years, to say nothing of my gratitude as an author for their wonderful editorial help and encouragement."

F.D., M.B.L., and E.Q. are equally grateful to you, *Mrs. S. — and who will be the next in your anatomy of anonyms and anagrams?*

8

SIR ORDWEY VIEWS THE BODY

by Rhoda Lys Storey

THE SLEEK DAIMLER purred through Much Deener Forest in Surrey. At the wheel, driving with practiced ease, and, it must be admitted, unusual restraint, was an elegant gentleman with straw-colored hair. Next to him sat an attractive young woman, while the back of the car was occupied by an impeccable manservant and a dozen bottles of especially fine port. These last, in fact, were the reason that Sir Ordwey Temple was not driving at his usual breakneck speed.

Without warning, however, he slewed to the side of the road and jammed on his brakes with such force that the valet cried out in anguish, "The port, sir, the port!"

The cause of this apparent heedlessness was an ancient Rolls-Royce rammed into a tree. It seemed to be sitting thus, its front horribly crinkled, with an air that said, "Such things can't happen to *me*!"

Sir Ordwey got out to investigate, his companion, Vera Arneith, close behind him. Sitting stiffly erect in the back seat of the Rolls was a tiny old lady. She, like the Rolls, seemed to convey the impression that she was not the sort to whom violence and damage could hap-

pen, but, again as in the case of the Rolls, it had happened nonetheless. A large knife was protruding from her flat and withered bosom, and she was quite dead.

"But recent," Sir Ordwey pointed out to Vera. "She's still warm. Looks bad for the chauffeur."

"What chauffeur?" asked Vera. "Oh, yes, silly of me. Little old ladies don't go about driving their own Rolls-Royces."

"Got it in one," agreed the flaxen-haired man. He was busily nosing about on the floor of the car. "Look at this powdery white dust. An absolutely smashin' clue! An' see," he continued, whipping out the magnifying glass he always carried, "there are traces of the powder on the steering wheel. *And,"* he finished triumphantly, examining the outside, "here's some on the right rear door. All we need is a dusty chauffeur and the case is solved. Wouldn't Clarke Sharper be proud of me!"

He was referring to a C.I.D. Inspector who was a close friend and with whom he had amicably tackled many cases; Sharper was also his brother-in-law, by virtue of having married Sir Ordwey's sister, Myra.

"But, Ordwey," asked Vera, "what *is* that dust?"

"Dunno yet," Sir Ordwey answered blithely, "but I'll find out." And he patted his coat pocket in which already reposed an envelope containing a sample of the dust. "Still," he muttered thoughtfully under his breath, "it isn't all that clear. Something's wrong. Now what is it?"

The pair returned to the Daimler, and once more Sir Ordwey slid behind the wheel. "Truben," the driver turned to face his valet, who had missed little that had taken place, "you haven't said a word. What do you make of it?"

"If I may venture to say so, sir, a number of possibili-

ties present themselves."

"Oh, indeed?"

"The vehicle might have been in mechanical difficulties, sir, and the chauffeur gone for help. And the lady attacked while he was gone."

"Right as usual, my Truben. So now we look for a dusty anybody. *If* he hasn't brushed the dust off. By the way, no one's asked, but I thought I'd tell you. She was robbed too. No purse about, don't y'know."

And with that he tootled carefully down the road and onto the high street of the village of Much Deener. The first shop they came to had a sign which read: *Grocer.* Here they pulled up — most gently, of course, out of consideration for the port.

Inside the shop was the harassed and aproned proprietor, who gave his name as Mat Yuling, and a black-clad, immaculately uniformed man who had every appearance of being the missing chauffeur.

"'Strewth!" the latter exclaimed when he heard of what had happened down the road. His distress appeared to be heartfelt and genuine, though it was difficult to tell how much was for his mistress and how much for the smashed-up automobile.

"Your phone," Sir Ordwey said loudly, and for the third time, to the little grocer.

"Sorry, sir, very sorry indeed," the little man exclaimed in a flustered way. "It's just one of those mornings, sir. I'm upset, and that's a fact. First, the boy doesn't show up to make the deliveries — sick, *he* says — and then one of the shipments comes all damaged and messy. And the post has just arrived. Bills and more bills, and my customers won't pay up, and what am *I* to do?"

"Just show me the phone," said Sir Ordwey patient-

ly. "Truben, you call the police while I talk to the chauffeur here."

That worthy, who gave his name as Rufe Haufetch, explained first how he had left matters by the roadside. "Ran right out of petrol, I did," he said. "And no use going back to the 'ouse, I'd no more there either. So I walked into town — it's not far, as you can see, sir — and obtained some down the street. 'Ere it is too," he added, indicating an unmistakable can of petrol on the floor.

"Then I called in 'ere, 'cos cook wanted some things and we knew as how Mat's delivery boy was took sick. But Mat 'ere tells me 'e delivered the stuff 'isself, so I was just leaving when you came. Right as rain I left 'er ladyship, sir.

"But, sir," he added in a different tone, "is — is the Rolls very bad, sir?"

Sir Ordwey made indeterminate soothing noises, and at length was able to extract more information from the chauffeur.

He learned that the dead woman, whose name was Lucie Pitcords, was by way of being the local dowager. The large manor house they had passed shortly before finding the stranded car was hers. Twice widowed, she lived with a rather profligate son by her first marriage, Foster Poligan, and niece-companion who was also a sort of secretary, Rae St. Ryce. Relations were none too cordial between the lady and her dependents, for she was very close-fisted with her money.

The staff, in addition to the chauffeur, included his wife, who served as the housekeeper. "But, sir, she's ailing something terrible, and we don't even know what it is. But she's flat on her back, and she'd no 'and in this

business." The rest of the staff consisted of the cook, butler, the parlormaid, all old retainers, and two locals from the village who helped out but did not sleep in.

"Ah, now we're getting on, said the sleuth," Sir Ordwey murmured. "Any of 'em — always excepting your wife, of course — could have reached the car on foot from the house, couldn't they? Why —"

"Ordwey, I've just thought of something," Vera interrupted. "Maybe one of them drained the petrol on purpose in order to strand the car and put the old lady at his or her mercy."

"Could be, could be, m'love. And yet, my thoughts take a different tack entirely. The running out of petrol could be tied in with the sick housekeeper, don't y'know.

"You hit one nail square on the head though. Running out of petrol, when the chauffeur is so obviously dedicated to his calling, is indeed a Suspicious Circumstance. But his wife's so sick, d'you see, he may be a bit preoccupied."

"That's it, sir," agreed the chauffeur eagerly. "I'd never let a thing like that 'appen in the ordinary way, and not 'alf put out 'er ladyship wasn't."

"Hmmm," said the little grocer portentously, getting into the detective spirit, "looks pretty bad for the young lady and gentleman up to the manor."

"Why, no," said Sir Ordwey coolly, and just a shade menacingly. Thoughtfully he rubbed his hand up and down the white apron that covered the grocer's front, and his hand came away white. "I rather fancy the case is solved, and it looks bad for *you.*"

"But, Ordwey," said Vera, when they were once again buzzing along, still taking it gently because of the

port, " how did you get it all, just like that?"

"Oh, the clues abounded, dear girl. That silly little man gave us motive, opportunity, *and* an explanation of the white dust all in one breath. And I only asked him for the telephone," he added thoughtfully. "Ought to be a moral there, though I'm dashed if I see it.

"Anyhow," he continued more briskly. "First there was that white dust — and what a story it told! From its position on the rear car door and on the steering wheel, we deduce it was most probably on the murderer's front. But the dusty one had opened the *right-hand* rear door. A chauffeur, in this automotively inverted land of ours, opens the left-hand door, if he wants his mistress to think he's acting naturally. That was the wrongness I sensed when I was still suspectin' the chauffeur.

"Then we went into the grocer's, and there was the chauffeur all in black, and white dust would have been *so* noticeable, and there wasn't a trace. Just idly, it occurred to me that white dust on the grocer's white apron wouldn't show at all. I wasn't serious, of course, at that point, but I did just think that powdery white dust might well be flour, the very thing you'd expect a grocer to have. And when he told us a shipment of goods had bust, I wondered if it mightn't be bags of flour. And then he really did tear it. He told us he was frantic over money.

"Have you ever noticed how these dear old dowagers can get away for so long not paying their bills? Not ordinary folk, no, but the ones with money and titles, nobody dares to ask 'em for it. And this particular lady, we're told, was one of the mean ones who didn't like to part with her shillings and pence. I think the robbery was just a little bonus, mind you; the main thing was

that the grocer chap figured, all in a flash, that if the old gal was dead they'd pay up her creditors, and then he could pay up *his* creditors.

"He really put the lid on it when he told us he'd been out making the deliveries himself. The chauffeur told us the grocer had been to the manor house. My guess is that the grocer saw the stranded car on his way back to his shop, all nice and neat and helpless by the roadside. He may have stopped to offer help, and when he found the old lady all alone he saw a way out of his troubles. Especially since he had a knife with him — probably one he used in his shop."

"But how did the car get smashed?"

"That's what really made me rule out the chauffeur," said Sir Ordwey. "The grocer ran the car off the road to try an' put off discovery, I think — must have had some spare petrol in his own bus — and went bung into a tree. Now I had the feelin' that the chauffeur wasn't too upset at the old lady bein' done in — but the Rolls! That really shook him. He'd never have harmed that.

"Besides, Vera," he added plaintively, "you're slippin'. I thought sure you'd spot the feller's name. Stares you in the face."

Vera was silent a moment, and then exclaimed, "Good lord, yes. How right you are!"

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Sir Ordwey Temple and Vera Arneith are great ones for anagrams and word play — at least, they are in the more familiar arrangement of their "real" names. For, as you no doubt realized from the beginning:

Sir Ordwey Temple = Lord Peter Wimsey
Vera Arneith = Harriet Vane

Lord Peter's reference to the grocer-murderer is, of course, another anagram:

Mat Yuling = guilty man

and surely you recognized at once Lord Peter's indispensable valet:

Truben = Bunter

and Lord Peter's sister and brother-in-law:

Myra = Mary

Clarke Sharper = Charles Parker

As in previous stories, other anagrams are strewn about — none of which probably fooled you:

Much Deener Forest = scene of the murder

Lucie Pitcords = corpus delicti (Lord Peter, you know, is fond of Latin)

Rufe Haufetch = the chauffeur

Foster Poligan = profligate son

Rae St. Ryce = secretary

All this being so, it is easy to see that the author's name is also an anagram:

Rhoda Lys Storey = Dorothy L. Sayers

whose inimitable brand of "Wimsey" inspired this deeply respectful pastiche.

9

LAMENT FOR A SCHOLAR

by Neil MacNeish

NORMALLY NOTHING HAPPENS at St. Merridue College — that is, nothing out of the ordinary. Young men arrive, become educated in their fashion, and leave to make place for a new lot of ignoramuses. Professors argue small points with each other in the common room after dinner, and gossip, when they have the opportunity, with remarkable pettiness about those colleagues who do not happen to be present at the time.

On one such evening they were doing just that — even with a distinguished visitor, Sir Blane Jopphy, in their midst. Sir Blane had simply stopped off to spend the night when his car had broken down, so he really didn't count. The fact that he was Commissioner of Metropolitan Police didn't count either, for what have Shakespeare and Homer to do with the Metropolitan Police?

"You know Deedcase," Sceptus was saying. Sceptus was lean and wiry, and had a low opinion of his colleagues. "Our distinguished fellow scholar, that is, who is not here tonight. Where is he, by the way?"

"Gone to town — to the cinema, I believe," put in Rasley scornfully. Rasley, even with one arm in a sling,

conveyed an impression of boundless, but acrid, energy.

"Just what you'd expect," said Sceptus. "As I was saying, I think he's getting — I do hate to say it — a bit shallow. I found him reading Suetonius in *English.*" A shocked silence, followed by a low murmur, greeted this revelation.

"Surely not," Farlee Prout-Rossiter, whose field was Comparative Literature, protested. He was younger, plumper, and milder than the others, apparently deficient in that aspect of personality which leads one to take pleasure in the foibles and failings of others. Perhaps, thought Jopphy, adiposity is the differentiating factor — or perhaps it's youth.

Hadenet, the white-haired and fragile Dean of the college, spoke to Jopphy. "I'm afraid all this is over your head," he said kindly. "Still, Deedcase has been annoying us considerably of late by his ill-considered tastes. It isn't seemly for a professor to behave thus, and we are no end disturbed."

At that precise moment the harmonious little scene was shattered by the unprecedented bursting in — there is no other expression for it — the bursting in of a student.

"Nudsett, what is the meaning of this?" asked the Dean sharply.

"Sir," replied the unhappy youth, "it really is important. We've found the body of Deedcase at the archery range — with an arrow through it. Through the body, I mean. It's — I mean he's dead, sir," he added.

"Now, now," said the Dean, employing a surprisingly mild tone to this boy who had entered the sacred precincts of the common room. "No need to be redundant, you know. When you say you found a body, that presupposes it to be a dead one."

"Sorry, sir." The youth looked properly abashed.

"Well, well," the Dean turned his attention from the student. "I don't know that I am versed in procedures for dealing with bodies that are dead." He waited for a response to this sally, then went on. "I do believe, though, that we are fortunate to have with us — what a singularly fortuitous coincidence, my dear sir — a — um — a bobby, if that is the correct nomenclature. Can you help us, Sir Blane?"

Jopphy was unruffled by this appalling ignorance of the difference between a bobby and a Commissioner of police. He merely said that he would be delighted to instruct the gentlemen in proper procedure, the first step of which was to call in the local police.

"But surely," the Dean protested gently, "you yourself have a greater — hem — eminence than they. If we already have a Commissioner on the scene, what need we with them?"

"So," thought Jopphy, "the old boy isn't quite so naive in worldly matters as he tries to appear. That might be useful to know. Decidedly useful."

Aloud he explained about jurisdictions, protocol, and similar baffling matters, and then he himself called the local police without further delay.

The local inspector, Collier Pactson, on learning to whom he was speaking, of course invited Sir Blane, with the utmost deference, to participate *ex officio* in the investigation.

Sir Blane then sent Nudsett back to stay with the body, and continued, while awaiting the arrival of Inspector Pactson, to elicit more information about the dead man.

For a large point had yet to be elucidated — and that, of course, was whether it was accident or murder.

Sceptus was as acid in his appraisal of Deedcase as before. Was he so innocent of the suspicious light in which he was thus placing himself, or was he pursuing some deep game of his own? The answer to that, Sir Blane decided, would come later.

"Deedcase," Sceptus was saying, "aroused much dislike. He was not a proper scholar, nor was he a nice man. He provokes — no, I should now utilize the past tense, should I not? — he provoked Rasley mercilessly. He threatened to expose his treatise on the weapons of the Bible as a thoroughly trumpery work. Of course, my dear fellow," he turned to Rasley, "I'm not so sure it isn't. But that's neither here nor there."

So that was it. Sceptus had, unfortunately for him, conveyed his own antagonism toward Deedcase too early and too firmly to undo — before, in fact, the death had been discovered. Now he was losing no time in supplying the others with motives as cogent as his own. Did not this also indicate, in some measure, innocence? For, if Sceptus were guilty, he would not have spoken against Deedcase even before the discovery; he would have known even then that Deedcase was murdered.

Rasley protested with vigor. "That was just the usual innocent merriment that adds spice to scholarship, so to speak." He waved his injured arm, winced, and continued to gesture with the other one. "We were the best of friends, really. That, indeed, is why we indulged in our little byplay of criticisms. Friendly bickering, that was all there was to it."

A noise came from the Dean that would, in a less utterly dignified person, be called a snort. Jopphy turned to him. "Do you, perhaps, have a different interpretation of their relationship, sir?"

"No, indeed, not at all," objected the Dean. "Surely Rasley knows best how he felt about his late colleague. All in the spirit of fun, if he says so."

For the second time that evening the peace of the common room was disturbed. The local inspector was a brisk, bustling, no-nonsense man, who ruffled the atmosphere considerably. However, he was somewhat ill at ease in this academic milieu, which threw his briskness a little out of focus.

"I'm very glad you're here, sir," he confided to Jopphy. "You are an educated man yourself, if I may say so, and you may understand these blokes. I don't know what they're talking about, and besides, a man has been killed — one of their own. Wouldn't you think they'd care? All they talk about are conditional concessive clauses and iambic pentameters and I don't know what."

"Dust, my dear Pactson — they're just throwing dust in our eyes with their twaddle. They think one of themselves killed Deedcase, and they're badly frightened. Decidedly that."

Pactson was cheered by this outlook. "Ah. That makes a difference, doesn't it? Now we know where we are. Let's have a look at the scene of the crime."

The Dean wanted to show them the way, but he was really too frail and palsied for a crosscountry walk at night. It fell to Sceptus to guide the police to the archery range.

"We installed it just two weeks ago," he explained as they went. "Some of us are quite good at it. I myself," he said, trying to sound modest, "am no mean hand with a longbow. Rasley too is quite an enthusiast, and avers that he is expert as well. But he hasn't demon-

strated this as yet. No. He broke his arm helping to install the equipment. Most fortuitous, don't you think?"

"Are you suggesting," asked Jopphy, "that he broke his arm deliberately, so as not to have to make good his claim to being a skilled archer? Or, alternatively, do you think he is pretending about the arm to avoid possible loss of face? Or even, pretending about the arm to prepare a defense against a charge of murder by longbow?"

"You may not believe it,' said Sceptus aggressively, "but I would not think Rasley incapable of such a deception. However, no. The arm is broken. I asked his doctor." He uttered an embarrassed titter. "You must think I don't have a high opinion of anyone. I like Prout-Rossiter, though. In fact, I like Prout-Rossiter so much I spent the whole day with him."

Here it comes, thought Jopphy — the first alibi. He had wondered when these learned but unworldly gentlemen would get around to that. The whole day, though. Wasn't that overdoing it? Or did it reveal rather that Sceptus did not know when the crime had taken place and was taking no chances? Or was that what Jopphy was *meant* to think? To be, or not to be, that is the question. Now why, he mused, should this have come into his head?

They walked on in the dark. Jopphy tripped over a piece of wood, halted, then inspected the archery range, now lit by the torches of the police. He was standing on a small hillock, by a shed which would no doubt prove to contain bows and arrows. The shed, he noted, was unlocked. Across the meadow, at what seemed to be a stiff version of regulation distance, were three targets.

They went over to those. Four targets, if one included the body of a man with an arrow in his chest.

"Not a doubt of it, sir." The inspector was brisk and bustling again as they sat in the common room, now cleared of professors and established as police headquarters for the investigation. Pactson had taken over, making the common room his own, vanquishing academe and installing brisk police practicality. "There was poison on that arrow. We can rule out accident once and for all. But you did that long ago, didn't you?"

"It had the smell of murder," Sir Blane agreed. "I can't be more definite than that. They weren't acting naturally, or what passes with them for natural. They thought it was murder. And one of them knew."

"And the others suspected it. I can follow you, and them, that far. Now then" — his efficiency was certainly coming through — "there are some we can rule out. The professors who weren't here at all tonight, for a start. They had engagements elsewhere, with reputable people to vouch for them that they really were where they said they were.

"Then there's the Dean. He could never draw one of those longbows. He's too weak and shaky by far for a feat of that strength, or for accurate aim. And Rasley couldn't have done it with his broken arm.

"Then there's Sceptus. I like him. What I mean is, I don't like him, but I like him as our man. He admitted he's a good shot with a longbow — had to, knew we'd find out — and he certainly didn't like Deedcase. His alibi could be a phony — we're checking it now. Of course, if it is, we'll have to consider Prout-Rossiter too, but he's less likely. Not even this bunch of birds has said anything against him, and he doesn't seem to be in on the general dislike of Deedcase. Besides, they all say he can't handle a bow and arrow. But that's not such a tell-

ing point — he could be pretending, of course. What's your opinion, sir?"

"The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," said Jopphy.

"I beg your pardon, sir?" Pactson was puzzled. "If you'll excuse my saying so, you sound like one of them. I know you're an educated man, but you're a policeman too."

"Sorry." Jopphy hadn't meant to speak the quotation aloud, but now he felt he had to explain. "It's just something I've been thinking of. I don't really know why. It doesn't get us much further. We know there are arrows in the case. There's a sling too, but as you so appositely point out, a man with his arm in a sling — legitimately — cannot draw a bowstring. I agree that we must find out more about Sceptus' alibi. Decidedly we must."

But why did he keep coming back to Hamlet's soliloquy?

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die; to sleep...

Well, someone had certainly died. And someone had taken arms, for a bow and arrow could be called that. And Deedcase's troubles, whatever they might have been, had ended. He did seem to have trouble in maintaining harmonious relations with his colleagues. But could that be called a sea of troubles? It might not have troubled Deedcase at all. He might, indeed, have en-

joyed it.

Sir Blane tried another tack. The murderer, presumably, had ended some of his own troubles by his act. For one does not kill unless one is troubled, and expects to find relief, or at least improvement in an intolerable situation. But could the murderer's troubles be said to be ended? Surely some further trouble would be involved in avoiding detection.

At that moment Nobcastle, a member of the local constabulary, entered with the discouraging news that Sceptus' alibi was valid. So, of course, interrelatedly, was Prout-Rossiter's. Not perhaps for the whole day. But that was not necessary — the claim had been, in fact, an extravagance. Deedcase had been killed between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. — they knew that now — and Sceptus and Prout-Rossiter had been in the latter's quarters during that period. They had been waited on by Prout-Rossiter's servant, who seemed quite reliable; also, various members of the student body had been in and out, some by invitation and some unexpectedly.

Decidedly the alibi was valid. It was too large, too numerous, one might say, to be anything but that.

"Which brings us back to Rasley and the Dean," said Pactson without much hope. "Do you think it could be someone we haven't yet considered? In this crazy place I could even believe a student might murder because of a grudge."

"Perhaps." But Jopphy's reply was absent-minded and without conviction. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. It kept coming back to that.

And now he saw how. "Pactson, Rasley is our man."

"Indeed, sir?" The inspector was doubtful. "How do you figure that?"

"It hinges, as I thought, on slings and arrows. Or, to be more exact, on a man with his arm in a sling, and on sling*shots*. That was what we overlooked. Arrows can be shot from slings, not exclusively from bows, as we had been taking for granted. By a skilled shooter of arrows, that is. A man who studies Biblical weapons and likes archery. The probability is high that he has experimented with slingshots.

"Perhaps, as Sceptus so uncharitably suggested, he did break his arm on purpose — to divert suspicion from himself. He planted his slingshot in the ground on that hillock we stood on and needed only one arm to draw the arrow back. I believe I actually tripped on the slingshot. Certainly there was a piece of wood lying about, on which I stumbled. He was careless to leave it there, but perhaps he was feeling overly secure because his broken arm would free him from suspicion, and so he didn't take sufficient pains over the other points. With poison on the arrow he didn't need the power of a longbow — just enough to break the victim's skin."

"And there was always his name, Pactson. His name pointed to him at once."

EDITORS' NOTE: Once again we have the homicidal handiwork of our Mistress of Anagrams, Mrs. Norma Schier.

As Sir Blane Jopphy remarked, the murderer's name was a dead giveaway — for "Rasley" anagrams to "Slayer"; and as in previous "disguised detectives" all the other proper names are anagrammatic clues:

St. Merridue = murder site
Deedcase = deceased
Hadenet = the Dean

Sceptus = suspect
Farlee Prout-Rossiter = Literature Professor (a beautiful anagram!)
Nudsett = student
Collier Pactson = local Inspector
Nobcastle = constable

The detective was no doubt easily recognizable:

Sir Blane Jopphy = Sir John Appleby

and the supposed author's name carried on Mrs. Schier's private and personal 'tec tradition:

Neil MacNeish = Michael Innes (a good enough anagram for Michael Innes himself to use!)

10

MR. COPABLE, CRIMINOLOGIST

by Amy M. Graingerhall

MR. MARTIN COPABLE was normally the most affable of men, but as one delay followed another he began to get impatient. He and his pretty companion, Monica Phonsey-Pritt, had been lunching pleasantly at a chic restaurant called Chatri's Centaur. When they finished their coffee, there was just time for Copable to take Monica to her appointment and keep his own at Scotland Yard. And then he couldn't find his wallet.

"Absurd," he murmured. "Know I had it." He sat blinking foolishly behind his horn-rimmed glasses — not an unusual expression for him. However, his friends could have told you that the foolish look was usually deceptive, whereas at the moment he felt exactly the way he looked.

Then he brightened. "Got it," he said. "Know my — er — valet, Goglemunster Fain? Loyal chap, but a bit unpredictable. He rearranged my pockets this morning."

A careful search did indeed produce the missing wallet, but then they were held up by the weather. It had just started to rain, causing taxis to disappear. When one was flagged at last by the doorman, Monica created

a final delay. She could not or would not go out in the rain until she had fished in her bag for an elusive envelope, containing a flower-patterned rainhat, which took quite some time to find. After carefully covering her expensive coiffure, she announced herself ready to challenge the elements.

Their taxi made its way through wet and slippery streets, and ultimately skidded around a corner, narrowly missing a van labeled Ruyland Laundry, then avoiding an omnibus and a stray pedestrian, and pulled up before ffothiette's, the exclusive furrier's, where Monica was due for a fitting.

Promising to return for her within the hour, Mr. Copable hurried off to Scotland Yard. He had told his good friend, Chief Detective Inspector Astolase Nautiss, that he would drop in about 2:30, and it was now almost 3:00.

Nautiss, however, didn't seem to notice the tardiness. "We're up against it, Martin," he complained in his dour way. "You've helped us before, and maybe you can now. It's this new wave of thefts."

Copable nodded sympathetically. "The invisible goods. Valuables disappear from shops, and neither you nor the shopkeepers know how. The owners say the things couldn't have got out."

Nautiss nodded. "That's it. We're pretty sure who's doing it — Pat Fisher, working with his new wife, a smart-looking woman named Ovie. When we tail 'em nothing happens, and when we let 'em alone — wham, something else gets stolen. We have to catch them in the act or with the goods. Their latest haul was the Byram emeralds. See if *you* can figure out how they're doing it."

Copable studied the files, promised to give the matter

his fullest attention, and departed to call for his lady friend.

As he arrived at ffothiette's, he was astonished to notice a most un-ffothiette-like commotion. Rowen, the present owner, was running in circles in an absolute frenzy of useless activity. His assistant was alternately trying to calm him and to peer into corners. Monica, forgotten, stood alone in the middle of the floor.

"Martin," she wailed when she saw him, "I'm *so* glad you've come. There was a mouse scampering around, and you know how frightened I am of mice! And they've lost a beastly coat and won't pay any attention to me! I told them you're very clever and you'd find it for them when you came." She glanced at the frantic furrier. "It doesn't seem to have comforted him much, does it?" she murmured. "But then he doesn't know how brilliant you really are."

Copable looked sharply for signs of sarcasm, found none visible, and turned his attention to the door, the scene of a fresh commotion.

Police were pouring through, Astolase Nautiss himself at their head. He clasped firmly by the elbow a tall chic woman clad in a graceful suit, who was volubly exuding indignation.

"I am *not* Ovie Fisher," she kept insisting with considerable hauteur. "My name is Loretta Case, as these gentlemen in the shop will tell you. I would be glad to assist the police, but I know nothing."

Nautiss gaped at Copable with an expression compounded of two parts suspicion and three parts disbelief. "The call came through right after you left me. How did you get here so fast?"

"Coincidence, my dear fellow," replied Copable, looking vacuous.

Only slightly mollified, Nautiss turned his attention to Mr. Rowen, who was still far too agitated to be fully coherent. He did manage to verify that the woman who called herself Loretta Case had been in shortly before, had tried on some furs, and had admired the astronomically priced silver mink which was now missing.

"But she did not buy it, or any other. She took no coat away with her. Oh, my beautiful mink, my masterpiece!"

Copable coughed. "Maybe you sent out another coat?" he offered helpfully. "And there was an unintentional substitution?"

But Rowen and his assistant, dithering though they appeared, were positive that no unauthorized coat had left their shop that day, and that no fur had been worn on departure that had not been worn on entering the exclusive shop. "We do watch, you know, with such valuable coats," Rowen said indignantly.

Inspector Nautiss turned the woman over to one of his men, and took Copable aside. "You see what that means," he said. "The coat's got to be in the shop. I'm convinced that woman took it. She must have hidden it here somewhere, and then she or Pat Fisher plan to get it away later — though I'm blessed if I see how that helps us.

"We found the woman window shopping farther down the block as we came along. How do you like that for cheek? Didn't even bother to leave the neighborhood. But she certainly had no coat on her when we saw her. And Rowen told me on the phone that the missing coat is a great, full, bulky one — so it must be here. We'll give this place a real going-over."

They set to work at once. They opened boxes awaiting

delivery. They checked the storage rooms. They looked for coats inside coats; they even — ignoring her astonished protests — looked very carefully at Miss Phonsey-Pritt's own expensive coat which she had worn that day, to see if somehow it concealed a silver mink. They explored every nook and cranny of the store, while Mr. Copable looked on with interest, Monica with fascination, Mr. Rowen and his assistants with hopeless misery, and Miss Case with a bored indifference, or a well-feigned facsimile thereof.

"I know it's not here!" howled the wretched furrier. "Do you think I would have called the police if it had been here? Do you think I don't know my own coat, or all the places in the shop where it could be?"

At last Inspector Nautiss mopped his brow and declared himself baffled. He went back to the furrier and pressed for further details about Ovie's — or Loretta Case's — previous visit.

"She left just after this young lady came in. It was during the rain."

"I remember," Monica said helpfully. "She actually walked by me. Let me think now. Yes, positively. And I should certainly have noticed if she were wearing a silver mink coat. No, she had on a dark green raincoat — belted, with a sort of plush collar. But then that mouse! Ugh!"

"Yes, yes," Mr. Rowen said hurriedly. "I'm terribly sorry, my dear Miss Phonsey-Pritt. Such a thing has never happened at ffothiette's. But neither has such a theft!"

"All right," said Nautiss. "Now where are we? The silver mink coat was here. Mr. Rowen showed it to 'Miss Case.' She left and now the coat's gone. She didn't wear

it out — everybody swears to that. Presumably she didn't carry it over her arm or behind her back?" That sarcastic query earned him nothing but withering looks. "Yes, but then *what*? I don't suppose she just folded it up and put it in her pocket, did she?" he asked, his sarcasm still dominant.

Copable gave a start, and for a moment there was a little less blankness in the pale blue eyes behind the horn rims. Then the vacant expression came back. "I say, Astolase," he murmured foolishly. "I think you've got it. Only the other way round, of course," he added firmly, as if that explained everything.

"Martin, what on earth?" Monica looked faintly embarrassed. "And after I told Mr. Rowen how clever you are!"

But Nautiss was looking at Copable with dawning comprehension.

"This time," he said jubilantly, "we *have* got them. Copable, my boy, you do have a good idea or two, I'm bound to admit."

Monica was turning from one man to the other, a plaintive and bewildered expression in her violet eyes.

"Will someone please explain to us mere morons?" she asked. "I don't like to appear stupid, but it really doesn't seem so clear to me — or to Mr. Rowen and his assistant. Just what did happen?"

"Don't you remember?" asked Copable. "What was the last thing that made us so late leaving the restaurant?"

"My rainhat, do you mean? What has that to do with it?"

"They make rain*coats* like that too, don't they? On the same principle? Carry 'em in your purse, and they

take up hardly any room, nice and handy for unexpected rainstorms. Open 'em to a big, loose-fitting raincoat, to put over whatever you happen to be wearing when the squall starts — even a bulky fur coat. All Miss Case had to do was wait for rain — never a long wait in London — come in and try on the silver mink, and walk out in a raincoat under the unsuspecting noses of the shop people. I expect she dolled up the plastic raincoat a bit so that at a casual glance it didn't look like what it was, but more like a permanent coat. Had a belt and a bit of a — what did you call it, my dear? — a plushy collar in her bag, no doubt.

"The mouse was part of it too. She let him loose, and while they were busy chasing him and appeasing Monica, she simply slipped on the raincoat, added the trimmings, and calmly walked out. They saw her leave in a raincoat and thought nothing of it. They keep a sharp eye out for *fur* coats leaving the shop, not for raincoats.

"That's all there is to the method, Astolase. Distraction and camouflage. Unexpected camouflage, of course, to escape your expert notice."

"Where's the silver mink now?" asked the Inspector. "Or doesn't your crystal ball show that much?"

"Trust Uncle Martin. When Miss Phonsey-Pritt and I first arrived, there was a laundry van around the corner. I daresay the other half of the team had charge of that. Miss Case, fur, and raincoat go into the van, Miss Case comes out alone, having deposited the stolen goods in a laundry bag, and she's clean. No reason she shouldn't do a little window shopping — most innocent-looking thing she can do — or maybe look over likely prospects for the next robbery."

"That's it," the inspector was triumphant. "And her

husband would have a system for passing the stuff on from the laundry van. Now that we know this much, we can trace the rest of it to them too."

But Ovie Fisher, alias Loretta Case, was new to the game and she was nervous. She gave herself away when she heard her tricks exposed. Mr. Copable had a final word for her.

"You should have stuck to your own name, you know. 'Loretta Case' is a dead giveaway. What name did you use when you stole the Byram emeralds? Esmerelda Frimbathy?"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Once again Mrs. Norma Schier (the real name of the author of Mr. Copable, Criminologist*) works her anagrammatic magic... In the last paragraph of the story Mr. Copable means, of course, that "Loretta Case" anagrams to "coat stealer" — just as "Esmerelda Frimbathy" anagrams to "Byram emeralds thief." (You have to hand it to Mr. Copable — he's an instant and expert anagrammatist!)*

And by the same method:

Chatri's Centaur = chic restaurant
Monica Phonsey-Pritt (what a marvelous name!) = his pretty companion
ffothiette's (not a bad name either!) = site of theft
Pat Fisher & Ovie = pair of thieves
Ruyland (the laundry van) = laundry
Rowen = owner

Mystery fans undoubtedly recognized the suave and seemingly bored dilettante detective:

Martin Copable = Albert Campion

and two other characters:

Astolase Nautiss = Stanislaus Oates

Gogglemunster Fain = Magersfontein Lugg
(These last two, Mrs. Schier tells us, gave her the toughest anagrammatic challenges in the series so far — finding anagrams in the spirit of the original names.)

And last but far from least, the "author" — Amy M. Graingerhall — anagrams (and what a beautiful anagram it is!) to the name of another great mystery writer whom Mrs. Schier highly admires and enjoys — the creator of Albert Campion and Others, the late and profoundly missed Margery Allingham.

11

THE FRIGHTENED MAN

by O. X. Rusett

I WAS MAD at Foler that day, which was nothing new, but I didn't know what to do about it, which was. Usually I can find some effective way to needle him, but at the moment I'd drawn a blank.

Which explains why I almost forgot to be observant when I answered the door to admit a shriveled little man who looked like a wrinkled pear — I was still preoccupied with how to get back at Foler. But a natural talent for observation honed to a fine edge by long training doesn't get derailed that easily, and I could see that the little man was disturbed and that his left hand was tightly clutching something inside his coat pocket. I half hoped he'd let go when I took the coat from him; but no, he just transferred the fist to the pocket of his jacket.

I ushered in the client — I was already thinking of him as one although he hadn't told me his business with us, had just handed me his card which read Chet Telin, Theatrical Agent. I knew Foler wouldn't be in the office for a while, and naturally it was Owen Foler he wanted to see. I'm Woodie Charing; and a pretty good detective

myself, but that's not usually enough for our clients.

This one was so itchy, though, that he did talk to me after all.

"This is urgent, Mr. Charing. I think someone in my household intends to kill me, and I'm running out of time. When will Mr. Foler be here?"

His voice didn't sound like a wrinkled pear — if wrinkled pears could talk, of course. It was deep and resonant, really surprising. The kind of guy who could make it big on radio and be killed by television. While I was at it, I did some more observing. He was expensively dressed, which was a definite plus, implying a fat fee, and he did look scared. I relented.

"Mr. Foler should be able to see you shortly," I said reassuringly. "In the meantime you're safe here."

He glanced around as if he expected to see a sinister relative pop out from behind a picture frame, but he nodded. I headed for the kitchen extension, not wanting him to hear the delicate way I would state his problem to Foler. Brent Firrenz was there, doing something with pots and pans that produced a tantalizing aroma.

I telephoned upstairs to the plant rooms.

"There's a rich bozo here who expects to be bumped off," I told the telephone. "I think he has a threatening note in his pocket. It looks like money for us."

A grunt, as I could have predicted, came over the telephone.

"I'll be down at six. Tell him to wait and I'll see him then."

I could have predicted that too. Foler always stays with his orchids till six, with some exceptions too rare to mention, and the mere threat of murder certainly isn't one of them. It was now twenty of six, which was why I

had informed Mr. Telin that Foler would be there soon.

I went back and conveyed the message again, and sat down at my desk to wait. Eventually the numerous pounds-worth which was Foler hove in and seated itself behind the other desk. He glanced at Telin's card, which I had thoughtfully put there.

"Well, Mr. Telin, what can I do for you?" he asked, in a not particularly gracious manner.

"Mr. Foler, I think someone in my household is trying to kill me. I want you to find out who it is in time to — uh — prevent it."

He had trouble with that one, but I suppose the prospect of having one's life taken away isn't pleasant.

"What makes you think so?" Foler asked.

"This note." And sure enough he finally drew the fist out of his pocket and handed over what was in it. Foler looked, raised his eyebrows a hundredth of an inch, and handed it to me.

It was one of those paste-up jobs of letters cut from newspapers and it said: *Your time has run out. You will die.*

"It didn't occur to you, Mr. Telin, that this might be a practical joke?" Foler asked.

"It did not. There is much bitterness toward me at home. In a way I own them all, and they resent it." There was something slightly European about his speech.

"Who are the people concerned?"

"First, my wife. Sue Pos is the name she goes by on her television interview program. My sister Tressi is a television actress. I'm agent for both of them. My brother Charim — that is a stage name too — is a — er — a lecturer in philosophy, you might say. Sheree

Pouke keeps house for me. She has been with my family since my childhood. That is all — four of them."

"What do you want me to do?"

He thought about that one. It was as if he had expected that when he got through naming them, Foler would pick one; and it hadn't occurred to him, until Foler asked, that it wouldn't be that easy.

"Can you come over and talk to them?"

I smiled to myself. The little man didn't know what he was asking. Foler never, and I mean never, goes out. At least, like with the plants, the exceptions are too rare to count.

Foler merely said that would be impossible, and Telin should get them all over here. The client raised some objections to that — he was really afraid to go home with someone on the loose wanting to murder him, and I couldn't blame him. So, after settling the fee — to my entire satisfaction — it was agreed that I would go with him, collect the whole kit and caboodle, and bring them back with me. That left Foler with nothing to do in the meantime but drink beer, but that couldn't be helped.

Telin had a Rolls-Royce and a chauffeur outside (hired by the day — not part of the household), which made up a little for my having to miss the dinner that Brent was cooking, and we glided smoothly through New York to one of the last of the Manhattan mansions.

He used his key when we got to the door, and let us both in. The hallway was dark, and Telin hadn't taken more than a few steps when he stumbled, knocking me off balance since I was right behind him. He must have pressed a light switch next, for the foyer suddenly sprang into view, revealing what Telin had stumbled over.

Lying kind of bunched up in front of us was a man —

or rather, what was left of him, which was the lifeless body. One look was enough to see that the vital force was no longer in it, and the bullet hole in the forehead showed why.

I shot a quick glance at Telin, who looked merely puzzled, as at some inexplicable but at the same time unimportant question. Well, after all, it wasn't *his* corpse, and that was what he was afraid of.

"Do you often find a dead body in your foyer?" I couldn't resist asking.

"What? No, of course not," he spoke absently. "I don't understand it. I don't even know who he is." He seemed really perplexed, though he might have brought us in deliberately as some kind of fall guys — murderers will do the screwiest things — and I couldn't rule it out.

In any event, I wasn't too pleased. I could guess the attitude of the police at my being on the spot, and it wasn't a pleasant prospect. They never will understand that I'm as honest and helpful as a Boy Scout.

Still, there was nothing for it but to call them, and I asked the way to the nearest phone. It was in a room full of people, and I looked them over as I muttered into the mouthpiece. After one curious glance they paid no attention to me, but clustered around Telin and asked him where he'd been. He sank wearily onto a sofa and didn't tell them. He didn't tell them about our interesting discovery in the foyer either.

It is a measure of how perturbed I was that I didn't give the two women in the room more than a quick look. Usually I'm happy if a case has even one, but I didn't like the way this case was shaping up. One of the women was petite, a little shorter than I like them, but generously enough endowed to make up for it. The other was tall and dark and willowy. There was a man there too, if you

could call him that — as small and shriveled as Telin himself, wearing nothing but a sheet, so help me. He didn't look the type for playing ghosts and besides, it was way past Halloween.

I called Foler and reported, and then I was introduced to the cast of characters. The small woman was Mrs. Telin, or Sue Pos, whichever you prefer, and she had intelligence to match her looks. She didn't act very friendly toward her husband, and took a dim view of my being there too.

The tall one was warmer. She had a brilliant smile for me, and I would have liked to pursue the matter further, but business came first.

The other little man, speaking in a funny singsong, identified himself as a guru. So that was the brother, the lecturer in philosophy. Since I had the idea that gurus come from India, and the Telins from Europe, I wondered how much of a fakir he was.

Our visit was cut short by the arrival of the police. I had taken the time to have them all look at the body, and to explore it myself before that. I found a name, Ed Dobaday, on an envelope, and little else. He was young and good-looking in a sleazy sort of way. There wasn't a clue as to how he had made his living — though, whatever it was, he wouldn't be doing it any more.

They all insisted they'd never seen him before, but beautiful Tressi wasn't very convincing. The guru I don't count; *he* wasn't convincing when he said it was raining, even though it was.

While I had been trying to get a line on these people, Telin had slipped out of the room. I let him go. It must have been to alert the housekeeper, because the first I saw of her she was ushering in the police, and she must

have let them in through the foyer, but she didn't look surprised.

She was really a dish — she made the other women look pale. She had vivid good looks — jet-black hair and snapping black eyes fringed with thick lashes. You could hardly call her the old-family-retainer type.

I got the kind of greeting from the force I expected — you'd think my old friends, Inspector Price Cromarsten and Sergeant Buster P. Binsley, would have welcomed another professional on the spot, but they never looked at it that way, and gave me a cold "Hello, Woodie," for openers.

I'll skip the next part, because it didn't get us very far, except that the police found a large pile of cut-up newspapers in an unused storeroom, from which the threatening note had been composed.

Eventually the police left and I was able to get the whole crowd over to Foler — my original mission, and one that had a lot more point now. I managed a few minutes alone with him to make a fast report before I brought them into our office.

I got them seated, enjoying the look on Foler's face when he had three women facing him, when he hates to have even one.

"You are here," he began bluntly, "for two reasons. One, somebody threatened to kill Telin, and the fact that someone else is dead doesn't cancel that out, as far as we know.

"Second, a man named Ed Dobaday was found dead in your house. You all had the opportunity to kill him, and killing seems to have been on someone's mind."

Telin — our client, that is, not the guru — looked interested. He was pretty tough in his own way. He might

be scared of being killed, but he wasn't letting it reduce him to open panic. Under the nervousness there seemed to be an assurance he would find out what he needed to know, and the would-be killer would never succeed. Meantime, he was analytically cold toward the rest of them.

"Mrs. Telin," Foler invited, "Woodie tells me you have a good interview program on television. That takes insight. Suppose you start, telling us about all of you."

That was a switch. He didn't like to hear from women usually, but Telin seemed already to have told us all he wanted to, and the other male was a little *outré* for Foler's tastes, swathed in his sheet as he still was.

"I haven't been married to Chet very long." It was a beautiful husky voice. "He was my agent — that's how I knew him — and we were married two years ago. He and Tressi and — Charim — came over from Poland five years ago. With Sheree, of course." She flashed the housekeeper a cool hostile glance. "He did well as an agent almost at once — really launched Tressi on her career. I myself owe everything to him." She sounded as if she meant it, but only partly.

"Charim went to school for a while, but dropped out of sight and then turned up as a guru. He's been lecturing on the West Coast — showed up a week ago, without bag or baggage, for a visit. As you may imagine, he's rather a nonconformist."

"I am interested in inner harmony," interrupted the odd singsong. "The material things do not matter."

"You are interested in material food," snapped Sheree Pouke. "Caviar, no less." She had a strong accent. "And you are all the time going out, in good material clothes.

"Meester Foler," she turned to him, "I do not understand thees. I live always with the Telins. They take me in as an orphan. I repay by running the house, here. I love Meester Telin. *That* one," she amended, nodding toward her employer.

"Miss Telin, we haven't heard from you," Foler said.

The tall girl slowly uncrossed and recrossed her legs, which was wasted on Foler, but not on me.

"My brother has been very good to me," she said slowly. "Perhaps his ambitions are hard to live up to at times, but no one would want to kill him."

"That's not what *he* says," probed Foler, but he got no takers. Blank faces returned his questioning look.

"Miss Telin," he rapped out next, "where have you seen the dead man before?"

"But I —" she started, then changed her tactics. "Oh, what's the difference? He's a TV actor too — not very successful. I haven't seen him around for a long time, and I heard he'd gone to Hollywood to have a try at movies. I hardly knew him."

I started to speak, but when I saw Foler's lips moving, pushing in and out, in and out, I changed my mind. When he does that he's really thinking, and I'm not about to disturb the process.

He looked as if he had the answers, and then the phone rang. He picked it up, and I lifted my extension. The voice of Alan Spurze, who does a lot of investigation for us and is the best in the business, came crackling over the wire. Foler must have called him after I made my report from the Telin house.

"Yes, that's what I expected," Foler grunted, when he had heard the report. "Thanks."

He faced them again.

"Dobaday was also a petty crook. His specialty was blackmail. Any comment? No? Pfui. Then I'll tell *you* what happened.

"Telin thought his life had been threatened. Any of you might have wanted to kill him. But there was always another possibility, and it's the true one. That note was never intended for Telin. You found it in your pocket?"

Telin nodded, surprised.

"Very well. We've heard that this faker here" — and he meant faker with an e, not an i — "has been going out well-dressed. I take it that doesn't mean a bedsheet. But he arrived only in that costume of his — no bag or baggage.

"It's a reasonable assumption that he's been wearing his brother's clothes. They're the same size. Think about the note being in *Charim*'s pocket and see where that gets us.

"Was *he* being threatened? I think not. On the contrary, he was the threatener. The connection between you and the blackmailer can be established," he snapped at the guru who, small to start with, seemed to be shrinking before our eyes. "You came to your brother because you were frightened, or because you ran out of money after this Dobaday bled you. People who believe in gurus don't like to find out they come from Europe. Any such information had to be hushed up, or it would write finis to a lucrative career. You were trying to scare him off with threatening notes — this wasn't the first; it was the latest and you hadn't got around to sending it when your brother happened to wear his own jacket, found it, and took it personally, not having too clear a conscience himself.

"But Dobaday hadn't scared that easily, and when he

came for you, you got rid of him the only way you could think of."

"You're crazy," Charim Telin said, in a voice that was no longer singsong, but straight narrative. "You can't prove it."

"The police can," Foler growled. "Anyway, you're the only one with the name for the murderer."

Foler turned out to be right as usual. When the police knew where to look, they had little trouble pinning it on Charim good and tight. I tried to make a date with Sheree Pouke, but she insisted she had to get back to her housekeeping. It was only a half-hearted effort by my usual standards, anyhow. I was thinking of something else.

What had Foler meant, that Charim Telin has the name for the murderer?

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I'm sure the reader is far ahead of me and knows all the answers, even if Archie — oops, I mean Woodie — doesn't. Charim Telin anagrams to "the criminal." I'm sure too that everyone recognized orchid-growing Owen Foler as the great Nero Wolfe, with sidekick Archie Goodwin scrambled to read Woodie Charing. And, of course, all the others:

Chet Telin = the client
Tressi = sister
Sue Pos = spouse
Sheree Pouke = housekeeper
Ed Dobaday = a dead body

and from the cast of Nero Wolfe's regulars:

Brent Firrenz = Fritz Brenner
Price Cromarsten = Inspector Cramer
Buster P. Binsley = Purley Stebbins

Alan Spurze = Saul Panzer

and of course the author, whom I've called O. X. Rusett, who graciously said he would like me to do a takeoff on his creation: the first two initials hint at both his own first name and the bulk of his famous hero — thus

O. X. Rusett = Rex Stout

12

F AS IN FRAUD

by Walter Cantree

IT WAS A chilly November day, which is what made Inspector Charly Moitt remember the storm windows. He was in this part of town because his chief, Lieutenant Rick Bedell of Homicide, had sent him there on a routine assignment, and he was in no hurry to get back to headquarters and maybe get sent out to do some more work. So he figured he could stall a little by dropping in on the Hypon Storm Window Company, and the Lieutenant would never be the wiser.

What had happened was, about a month ago he'd caught a holdup artist plying his trade, and the would-be victim, Dinnon McCafee, turned out to be head and chief salesman of this storm-window outfit. As luck would have it, Charly and his wife May had just been telling each other they'd *have* to do something about storm windows before another winter.

In his gratitude McCafee had offered to get him some good seconds. Well, maybe not "offered" exactly, but he'd responded to a hint or two. Winter wasn't getting any further off, so today seemed like a fine time to see him and square away the details of installation and so

forth, Charly being in this part of town and in no hurry to get back and all.

He parked right in front of the dingy storefront, and as he got to the doorway he almost collided with a man in a plaid raincoat coming out. The man looked pretty mad, and was in such a rush he stepped on Charly's foot.

"Hey, watch it!" Charly said gruffly, but the other man just growled and brushed past.

"Now, what's bugging him?" Charly wondered as he went inside. There was no one in the little office, and after hanging around a few minutes in hopes McCafee would show up, Charly left. He was about to get back in his car when he noticed the diner next door. He was cold, and he still wasn't too anxious to get back to headquarters, so he decided to have a cup of coffee first.

Which was how he happened to discover that the guy who'd just stepped on his foot had already gotten himself murdered.

He didn't find out right away, though. He perched himself on a stool up by the front, ordered a cup of coffee and a cheese Danish, and made conversation with the burly ruddy-faced counterman.

It was when he was on his way to the Men's Room that he spotted the fellow, scrunched into a booth way in the rear. He recognized the plaid raincoat right away, and, remembering how mad he'd been, said as he started to go past, "Feeling better?"

Something about the no-answer and much-too-complete stillness stopped him and he bent down. Then he straightened the man up and whistled. There was a neat bullet hole in the man's chest, and powder marks all around it. The guy was, without question, dead.

"Hey, Mac!" he called up front. "Where's the phone?"

Then he called Lieutenant Bedell, and felt better knowing the Lieutenant and the fellows were on their way. He tramped back up front, his mind working. This guy hadn't had much time to get himself killed — say, about five minutes. What luck he'd been around, practically a witness. He didn't think the Lieutenant would make too much of a point wondering how he happened to be there.

Charly climbed back on his stool and took a swig of coffee. "What's your name, Mac?" he said to the counterman.

"What's it to ya?" came the surly response. "What's up, buddy?"

"As if you didn't know." He put a snarl into it. He figured he might as well get tough — how could the counterman help hearing the shot in this little place? Why, the guy *had* to be a witness.

Only he wasn't. When he found out he was talking to Inspector Moitt of Homicide, he got a lot more respectful and said his name was Gruenn. But what he could tell Charly wasn't what Charly had hoped for at all.

Gruenn said the fellow in the raincoat had come in alone, looking mad, and ordered coffee. Charly himself could vouch for his being mad. Gruenn also thought that someone else had come in the back way, from the parking lot, and sat in the booth, because he'd heard voices, but he hadn't gotten a good look. Instead, after waiting to make sure the second guy wasn't going to order, Gruenn had stepped out of the diner himself.

"Just for a minute," he explained. "I had a message for the people in the store next door."

"Yeah?" Charly wasn't going to let him get away with that. "I was over there myself."

"You got me wrong, Inspector. I went through the back way."

"Well, why didn't you say so?" Charly was extra-gruff, because he should have thought of that himself. But then he thought of something else.

"So how come you didn't get a look at the second man?"

"You can see how high those booths are. I just wasn't looking their way. Matter of fact, once I was on my way out I didn't want the other guy to get any ideas about ordering till I got back, so I sort of avoided letting 'em catch my eye."

Charly nodded, and then Bedell was there, along with Ken Badley and some of the others, and he was glad to have the Lieutenant take over, and not be carrying all the responsibility himself any more. Not that he couldn't if he had to, but there was something reassuring about the Lieutenant, and about being part of this particular team.

Charly filled the Lieutenant in quickly. While he'd been questioning Gruenn, part of his mind had been working on what to tell Bedell. Charly figured he'd better say the guy had been to the storm-window place because it might make a difference; you never knew what was important. But the Lieutenant didn't have to hear that Charly had been there too.

So he just told him he'd stopped for a cup of coffee, and had seen the guy leave the one place and go to the other. Then he said he'd browsed in the shop windows a few minutes before going in for his coffee. From that part on it was a straight report.

When he finished they went to take a more careful look at the victim. He was a good-looking man, about 35, and he didn't look mad any more, just surprised, kind of. There was a gold band on the fourth finger of his left hand, and the Lieutenant shook his head. "Someone'll have to tell the wife, and find out what she knows. Find a name and address?"

Charly got the guy's wallet and came up with V. Michetti, and an address on the outskirts of town. Bedell sent him and Ken Badley to check it out.

The Michettis lived in one of those new housing developments that leave a lot of finishing to the proud owners. Mrs. Michetti was kind of pretty, with a nice husky voice. She was wearing a miniskirt, and that got Charly trying to picture May in one, but he gave it up.

They couldn't really tell how she took the news about her husband. She didn't go to pieces, that was for sure, but it could have been shock — or indifference. Unless, of course, it was no news at all. She had no explanations, and no ideas.

"I see you don't have any storm windows," Charly observed, and Badley gave him a surprised look. But Badley hadn't seen Michetti coming out of the Hypon Storm Window Company, and Charly had.

"We're getting some." Mrs. Michetti looked as surprised as Badley. "Ordered them ages ago."

Charly nodded, and he and Ken took off for headquarters. On the way to the squad room they saw a skinny guy sitting on a bench.

"Hey, McCafee!" Charly greeted him. "I was at your place today."

"Yeah, I know," the other said sourly. "Otherwise I wouldn't be here now.

"Don't mind me," McCafee added more amiably, making an effort to be pleasant, "but it's my busy time, and I don't know anything about all this. Put in a good word for me, will ya?"

"Sure," said Charly, and went on. But just because a guy's being robbed doesn't make him honest, and what else did he know about him when he came right down to it?

The next few days Charly was kept pretty busy checking out various points of the case. The wife wasn't cleared, exactly, but they couldn't exactly pin anything on her either. She might have been running around — but they couldn't find out for sure. And why would she come to an out-of-the-way part of town to meet her husband in a diner? It just didn't add up.

One thing, though, the counterman didn't insist that the voices he'd heard had both been men's, though he'd thought so at the time. He said one could have been a husky-voiced woman. And where could they go with that?

"There is also," Lieutenant Bedell pointed out in a session with the squad, "the storm-window angle. I never heard of a store owner shooting his customer because the customer got impatient, but it's funny how McCafee can't account for his time. If he were out selling, you'd think a customer could alibi him. He *says* he was working on his order book — on a park bench in November! Ken, what did you get out of McCafee's clerk?"

"Chic Campolete?" Badley looked thoughtful. "I'd say that guy was scared. I never saw anyone unhappier-looking. Kept saying he was just a clerk, and knew nothing about the storm-window business. I'd say he

knows something, though, and it wouldn't be too hard to get it out of him. He confirms what Gruenn the counterman says, that he was in the back talking to him just before our boy here discovered the murder."

Charly had been thinking over his first contact with McCafee, and now he spoke up, carefully refraining from mentioning how he'd got his idea. It still wasn't going to hurt the case to keep his connection with the Hypon Storm Window Company out of it.

"Lieutenant, maybe it would help to check with police headquarters in some other cities." He explained what he had in mind, and Bedell looked interested.

"Okay, boys, that's all for now. Let's see how Charly's suggestion pans out. It could explain a lot."

The next several hours Charly had domestic matters on his mind. If he was right, he really had problems.

Then Bedell came up to him, and he was grinning. "You hit it, Charly, right on the nose. I wonder what gave you the idea." He looked at him thoughtfully, but didn't pursue the subject. "The Hypon Storm Window Company is nothing but a confidence racket — we've heard from Rochester so far, and McCafee worked the same thing there; takes orders with fat deposits down, and when he's collected enough, he blows. Michetti was getting too suspicious, and got killed for it. We've got the murderer too."

"You got McCafee?" Charly asked.

"Well, we got him on fraud charges, but he didn't kill Michetti."

He led the way into his office. Gruenn was sitting there looking surlier than ever.

"Campolete cracked and told us all we wanted to know. Gruenn the counterman had caught on to the il-

legality of the activities next door, and was into McCafee for a piece of it. He was too greedy to give up a good thing; Michetti in all innocence told him he was going to have McCafee investigated, and Gruenn didn't wait to hear more. He shot him on the spot and ran to Campolete to alibi him. The two of them were in the back of the shop, all right, while Gruenn convinced Campolete he'd not only have to keep quiet but alibi him besides. Campolete was McCafee's accomplice — but murder was too much for him."

Charly was pleased that he'd thought of the main part of it — that the whole thing might be a racket. On thinking it over, he'd realized that McCafee had been pretty reluctant to offer him that particular favor. It might even be, Charly had concluded later, that he'd promised him "seconds" only to get rid of him. If he was running a racket, he wouldn't want a persistent cop around, and Charly could be pretty persistent.

"The funny thing is," Bedell said, "if this was a case with a brainy amateur detective I'd say Gruenn's name had something to do with it, but we don't go in for that kind of fancy stuff."

But Charly wasn't really listening. He was thinking that here it was November and they didn't even have storm windows on order. May wasn't going to like that at all.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: It took all the restraint I could muster not to call this one A As in Anagram. *I compromised with the title I did use. For what Bedell meant, of course, was that the letters in Gruenn's name anagram to "gunner." In fact, anagram aficionados were no doubt way ahead of Charly and Lieutenant Bedell on*

the solution of the case; the names gave it away all along the line. For example:

Hypon Storm Window Company = Phony Storm Window Company

Dinnon McCafee = confidence man

V. Michetti = the victim

Chic Campolete = the accomplice

I'm sure that readers of EQMM had no trouble recognizing the police procedural series on which this is a take-off, featuring:

(Inspector) Charly Moitt = (Inspector) Mitch Taylor

(Lieutenant) Rick Bedell = (Lieutenant) Bill Decker

Ken Badley = Ed Balenky

(Charly's wife) May = (Mitch's wife) Amy

And finally, the author of this fine series — Walter Cantree — anagrams to Mr. Police Procedural himself — Lawrence Treat.

13

THE WEAPON FROM NOWHERE

by Conway Lonstar

I WAS A MAN with a mission when I walked into Maître Glenthier's magic shop one April afternoon. Threading my way through the usual assortment of illusions with price tags—and healthy price tags at that—I spotted the proprietor-magician himself in the back room, bending over a complicated piece of apparatus I had never seen before.

Without looking around, Glenthier said, "My crystal ball tells me that Art Shores just walked in, and not merely to pass the time of day, either."

"I didn't know my walk was that distinctive," I said.

"It's not, but your face is—reflected in these mirrors." I realized then that he was working on an intricate arrangement of reflecting glass. "You look too determined for a social call. What's up?"

"Have you heard of Mrs. de Seur?"

"The housewife in the suburbs who suddenly discovered she has the gift of second sight? Who hasn't?"

"Her latest prediction," I informed him, "makes the others look like peanuts. She's predicted a murder at ten

o'clock tonight—a murder in her own house!"

"What did she do—send engraved invitations to the Homicide squad?"

"I don't know about that, but the wire services got an anonymous tip and passed it on to me. I'd already been approached to write her up, and this clinches it—if the murder comes off. Needless to say, I'm going out there, and equally needless to say, I'd like you to come along. If there's any hanky-panky you're the one to spot it."

Glenthier reached up and pulled a Kennedy half dollar out of the air, looking thoughtful. "What can you tell me about her?"

"Not much. I've done some research on her for this article, but all I know is she's lived quietly for years in a Westchester suburb—Scarsdale—was married to a stockbroker, and has no children. Her husband died last year and she suddenly discovered this 'gift,' in quotes. I can't find out anything about her or de Seur before they settled in Westchester, but there's a rumor they were once on the stage."

Glenthier looked interested.

"Mindreading? Clairvoyance?"

I shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine. Not under that name, though. I've checked—no record of de Seur."

"How do we get in tonight? Journalists invited?"

"Your own mindreading isn't too bad," I grinned. "She had to be coaxed, but she agreed to let me in—and about half a dozen reporters as well. You can be my photographer."

"Just what did she predict?"

" 'There will be a death,' " I quoted. " 'The message is not too clear, but I hope to see more before the time

comes. There is a murderer in this house who will kill at ten tonight.' "

"She's got something up her housewifely sleeve, I'll bet you a rabbit from a top hat. My engagement book happens to be clear for this evening. Let's go, and you can tell me more over dinner."

In the restaurant Glenthier was full of questions, to most of which I didn't have answers. I had one though—about the people closest to Mrs. de Seur. There was a young niece who had lived with her for a year or two, Eugenia Coyn, and a Slavic servant she had hired recently. A man named Bill Mackrae had also been on the scene a great deal since her husband's death—a good-looking man with no visible means of support.

At nine o'clock we presented ourselves at an impressive Colonial home on Merridue St. in Scarsdale. The maid, Strevna, let us in, throwing dark suspicious glances at us and muttering to herself. She ushered us into a library at the rear of the house and then marched off, a fierce bony figure.

Mrs. de Seur was sitting in a big leather chair, resting her head wearily against its back. Her eyes were half closed, but she opened them to appraise us. She was a short dumpy woman who could have profited from a course at a charm school. I'd have thought the hungriest wolf wouldn't take the slightest notice of her; yet the tall handsome man at her side was hovering attentively.

We introduced ourselves, Glenthier improvising the name of Hopper Hartog for his alias, and then we took two of the straight chairs that were scattered around, as yet unoccupied.

"Glad to meet you," Mrs. de Seur said in a voice that matched her appearance for tiredness and lack of per-

sonality. "This is Mr. Mackrae." It seemed to me that, tired or not, she looked pretty sharply at Glenthier. We had fixed him up with a camera, of course, and maybe it bothered her because she realized she wasn't photogenic.

Mackrae took drink orders from us, and brought something for Mrs. de Seur without asking her what she wanted.

"I still say you're making a big mistake," he said to her worrriedly. "Why don't we just clear the house and go somewhere? I have a feeling we're asking for trouble."

"No, Bill. I've got to see it through," she said wanly. "Otherwise I'll never feel safe."

"*I* can protect you," the tall man growled.

Further conversation was cut short by the arrival of reporters, some of whom I knew, who seated themselves in the empty chairs with mumbled greetings.

Mrs. de Seur cleared her thoat. Glenthier started to reach up, then shoved his hand in his pocket. I think he was going to materialize another of those Kennedy half dollars before he remembered he was supposed to be a photographer.

"Gentlemen," the woman said in her flat grating voice, "I have been resting to conserve my strength, to devote it all to trying to—" She broke off with a sharp indrawn breath as the inner door opened. A man entered and closed the door, wordlessly. He leaned his back against the panels and nodded to her.

"He's got detective written all over him," whispered Glenthier to me, and I nodded agreement. That answered another of Glenthier's questions—whether she believed enough in her "gift" to call in the police—and

whether *they* believed enough in it to be present.

"As I was saying," she continued, taking no further notice of the newcomer, "I shall try to penetrate the future, to receive a vibration . . ." She shook her head. "I can't get anything. Perhaps, if it weren't so bright—"

Mackrae turned off some lights, leaving only the dull glow of one lamp in a corner, and returned to the woman's chair, perching himself on its arm.

She closed her eyes and pressed a plump hand to her forehead. You could have heard a feather drop.

Suddenly she gasped, then sat bolt upright, her eyes wide. "A *man* will die! At ten o'clock, that was correct. But I really thought that *I* was to be the victim. How strange!"

It was now 9:30.

Some of the reporters began to fire questions, and for the sake of appearances Glenthier took a couple of pictures.

Mrs. de Seur shook her head. "That's all I can tell you. If you had kept quiet I might have learned more. But now—I get nothing." She looked drained.

Mackrae stalked across the room to the French windows and threw them open.

"I'm going to look around out there," he said grimly.

"Wait, I'll go with you," Glenthier said, and at the same time the man at the inner door yelled, "Stop!" But both of them were talking to empty air. Drapes fluttered in the breeze. Glenthier went over for a look, but came back to his seat.

"Pitch-dark out there," he murmured to me. "I couldn't tell where he went. But my own brand of prophesy says we'll discover he's involved in all this hocus-pocus, right up to his handsome dark eyebrows."

The silence in the library persisted while the minutes wore on. Mrs. de Seur rested quietly in her chair. The rest of us kept checking our watches. 9:55. 9:58. 9:59.

10:00.

Nothing.

We all glanced at each other and began to relax—until then I hadn't realized how tense I had been.

And then—*crack!*

A shot exploded outdoors. Mrs. de Seur screamed. Our eyes were fixed on the French windows where the drapes began moving back and forth in a kind of frenzy. Then the tall figure of a man appeared. He sort of grunted, there was a light thud, and he pitched forward on his face into the room. Mrs. de Seur screamed again.

The detective at the door got there first, with Glenthier a close second and myself at the magician's elbow. When the body was turned over, we saw that it was Mackrae, and we got another shock. Protruding from his chest was a knife!

"Dead," muttered the detective. He looked at the still-smoking gun that Mackrae had dropped as he came in, which had made the thud we heard. Then he shouted out through the open French windows. When one of his men appeared, the detective gave some sharp orders, then made for the telephone.

Mrs. de Seur never moved; she sat hunched in her chair.

The detective called headquarters to send a doctor, technicians, and equipment. As soon as he hung up, he began a quick questioning—designed, so it seemed, to establish that we knew nothing, had seen nothing, and could be dismissed. It was true enough that none of us had anything helpful to offer, and the reporters hardly

needed urging to leave—they had news to report with a capital N.

On the other hand, Glenthier and I were anxious to stick around, so we dropped the name of our old friend Grove Maighan of N.Y. Homicide, which worked like Grade A magic. The detective called Maighan, and was evidently informed that the detective was loaded with luck to have Maître Glenthier on the scene of the crime. When he hung up, the detective beamed at us.

"Ted Ceviet's the name, gentlemen. I don't mind saying this sort of case is a little out of my line. We wouldn't even have come out on a crank call like this, but the old girl's predictions have been making the front page, and the Chief wasn't taking any chances. But how *could* she foresee this? Maighan says you're a wizard, Glenthier, with these supernatural-looking problems. Any ideas?"

"Oh, yes," Glenthier said, reaching into the air for a Kennedy half dollar. "I have ideas. But they need crystallizing, to say the least. Mackrae fired the gun, I suppose?"

"Looks that way," nodded Ceviet. "As if he saw someone out there and fired at him, and then another guy stabbed Mackrae."

"No, sir," broke in a new voice from the doorway, followed by some commotion as two women burst in, each accompanied by a plainclothesman. It was one of the men who had spoken.

Eugenia Coyn, who could have given her aunt lessons in charm—she was a real dish to look at—glared at Mrs. de Seur. "Now see what you've done!" she said angrily. "I hope you're satisfied." Her aunt hardly looked at her.

"I quit," was Strevna's terse contribution.

"What did you mean, Mannie?" Ceviet finally got a chance to ask.

"I was with this gal here, in her room. It's right over this one. Directly after the shot I looked out the window and beamed my flashlight on that gent. There was no knife in him at that time, and no one else near him. I watched him right up to the moment he came inside."

"Could the girl have done it?" asked Ceviet.

"She wasn't near the window," was the answer, and the other plainclothesman admitted that was also true for the maid, who had been in the kitchen under his guard.

"Psychokinesis," came the flat voice from the leather chair. "They both have the power."

It took a while, after that contribution, to prevail on the two women to take Mrs. de Seur upstairs, with their guards still in attendance. "If Mannie Collspath and Mitchell Pasanno say the two women couldn't have done it, they couldn't have. They're both good men," said Ceviet. Turning to Glenthier he asked, "What's psychokinesis?"

"Manipulation of physical objects by mental means," answered the magician. "People who've studied it, like Professor Rhine and others at Duke University, claim it works. I don't believe it myself. Their research methods are a little loose in my opinion."

"Have you a better explanation of how this could have been done?" sighed Ceviet. "I had a man outside—he wasn't in the rear until too late to see anything, but I told him to search the grounds, and he reported while the two women were here. He found nothing—no footprints, except Mackrae's. And there was no one

near the door on my side. I'm going to be the laughingstock of the force."

At that point his technicians arrived, and the usual hustle and bustle of fingerprinting, photographing, and so on followed. In due course the doctor pronounced that it was the knife that had killed Mackrae.

We went to talk to Mrs. de Seur, looking into the kitchen and Eugenia Coyn's room on the way. Both rooms were in the rear of the house, but there didn't seem to be any way that either woman could have stabbed Mackrae without her guard knowing. If anyone in the library had done it, *we'd* have known. If we ruled out psychokinesis —and Glenthier really knows what he's talking about in such matters—there wasn't much left. Suicide seemed the only answer physically possible, but that's not the way suicides happen. Whom or what had Mackrae been shooting at? How had Mrs. de Seur known in advance that it would happen? It all added up to a king-size headache.

Ceviet looked as if he were beaten. Glenthier just looked thoughtful. Nor did the magician's expression change when he stubbed out a cigarette in his closed fist, then opened an empty hand.

When we reached her, Mrs. de Seur was crying—which did nothing to improve her looks.

"I was going to marry Bill," she sobbed. "He's been so good to me since my husband died. Eugenia and Strevna are both jealous because of him. Which of them did it, Mr. Ceviet?"

"You predicted it. Don't *you* know?" he snapped.

"No," she said seriously. "It may come to me, but I feel somehow it won't. You do understand, don't you, that predicting it didn't *make* it happen?" The poor

woman was rather pathetic, trying to make us understand that second sight wasn't a method of murder.

"I know how it happened," Glenthier announced suddenly, "and I know who did it. If only I could think of the name—"

"Great," grumbled Ceviet. "You know who, but you don't know the name?"

"Got it!" Glenthier was triumphant. "Alisa!"

At this apparently meaningless name Mrs. de Seur turned white as a ghost.

"You're mad! Who is this man?" she protested shrilly.

"It will be easy enough to establish that you're Alisa. Besides, microscopic examination can prove the knife was in your chair—shoved down next to or under the cushion. There's bound to be marks on the leather from the knife.

"There's your murderess, Ceviet. Her 'gift' should have told her she'd be found out."

"Damn you," she said.

Glenthier was only too happy to explain to Ceviet and me later, over refreshing Scotches in a quiet suburban cocktail lounge.

"Misdirection, as usual," he said. "The shot was meant to point to a killer *outside*—and to provide distraction. Mackrae and she were in it together—up to a point. She added a twist of her own that wasn't in *his* program. He was to go outside and fire a shot, and she was to stab anyone who took her fancy, as long as the victim wasn't near her. They probably didn't intend for her actually to kill—an attack would have been near enough to her prediction to get her a lot of impressive publicity.

"But," objected Ceviet, "how *could* she have stabbed someone who was not near her?—to say nothing of doing it in front of witnesses without being seen."

"Art told me she'd been on the stage, and reasoning pointed to her having been a knife thrower. A thorough investigation will confirm it, but I've saved you the trouble by recalling a little lady from my circus days who was billed in the side shows as 'Alisa and Her Magic Knives.' She was so smooth and fast you hardly saw her hand move, and she was a sure shot standing or sitting.

"Tonight she was to have thrown her knife right after the shot, or when Mackrae made his entrance, the two occasions they provided to distract us—when we weren't on such a sharp lookout, when we thought it was all over after the shot. But *her* plan was to fling the knife at *him* as he fumbled with the drapes. She was lightning-quick, catching him the split second after his chest showed through the curtains—while leaving us with the impression that it had happened *before* he came in. What we thought was his grunt was the impact of the knife, which she tried to cover with a scream."

"All right," I argued. "She told us why she killed Mackrae—he was blackmailing her—maybe her husband's death also involved a little of her sleight of hand and he knew about it. But why in Houdini's name did they plan this whole rigamarole?"

"Money's the logical reason," said Glenthier, "and Mackrae wanted her to have it—I suppose he's spent whatever she had. I'd say she wanted to go on the stage as a mindreader—I wouldn't be surprised if that used to be her husband's line before he became a stockbroker; then she'd know all the tricks. But you can see she

hasn't the looks; who'd hire her? But with the publicity he'd get from this stunt her looks wouldn't matter; she could choose her spots—and her fee.

"Besides," finished Maître Glenthier, "her name—and I don't mean Alisa—was a dead giveaway."

"It's so simple when you know how it's done," said Ceviet, echoing a thought I've often had. Glenthier miraculously pulled two Kennedy half dollars out of the air and left them as a tip.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Yes, anagrams again. The letters of "Mrs. de Seur" can be rearranged to spell "murderess." And "Alisa" anagrams to "alias."

Maître Glenthier should have been easily recognizable as the great magician-detective—The Great Merlini. His Watson, Art Shores, is better known as Ross Harte, and Grove Maighan of N.Y. Homicide is really Homer Gavigan of same.

Other anagrams:

Bill Mackrae = blackmailer
Ted Ceviet = detective
Eugenia Coyn = a young niece
Strevna = servant
Merridue St. = murder site
Mitchell Pasanno = plainclothesman
Mannie Collspath = plainclothesman
Hooper Hartog = photographer

And finally, of course, The Great Merlini's creator, who has been known to play his character in real life and is a mighty tricky fellow in his own right: Conway Lonstar stands for Clayton Rawson, a master of mystery legerdemain.

14

THE INCREDULITY OF BR. FANEWORTH

by H. T. Greenstock

FOUR PEOPLE SAT talking in the drawing room of a London house. The atmosphere was strained by a powerful uneasiness, which the cheerful fire, and the even more cheerful visitors, failed to dispel. Two of the people lived in the house, and it was from them, and especially from the wife, that the uneasiness emanated.

"It's supposed to be an extraordinary painting," said the husband, who went by the name of Dan Kammer, and was a well-known expert on paintings and their history.

"That's not the point," said his wife, who was a remarkable woman with a startling beauty, called, for some reason, Anabel Row. "Di Mechio means you no good, and never did. Br. Faneworth, don't you agree?"

The little friar, thus appealed to, shook his head. "I'm afraid I couldn't say, not knowing the man, but I can see he makes you very anxious."

"I *do* know him," the lady asserted, "and that is why I am anxious. Still, Dan, I know you are determined to see this unusual painting, so go ahead, but please hurry back. It's amazing, the number of pictures he has found for you to look at lately. But he has not done you any harm

yet, so perhaps I am wrong."

With that, Kammer departed, offering assurances that Di Mechio was all right, but there was something in his voice that was perhaps a little overhearty.

Anabel Row continued to express her worries to her guests, who were, to look at, a strange pair. The friar was short, dumpy and insignificant-looking, clad in the shapeless garb of his order. His companion, who was very tall, was a detective who had previously been a famous criminal, called Balfaumé. Br. Faneworth had been instrumental both in his ending the one career and beginning the other, and they were often together. The friar was a friend of the Kammers, and they had called to consult Kammer in connection with a case of art forgery Balfaumé was working on.

"Di Mechio is a strange man," said the lovely lady, "and, I think, an evil one. We have seen nothing of him for years. Just lately he has struck up an acquaintance with my husband, which seems very odd."

When an hour and part of another had gone by, she could not contain her agitation any longer, and the others offered to walk over to meet her husband and bring him home. Her gratitude was heartfelt, and the two friends set out.

The address they were given proved to be a gloomy old house with a disconsolate and semi-neglected air. They rang the bell and could hear it pealing within, but no one came to the door.

"Anabel Row is not a fanciful woman," said Br. Faneworth. "I am most awfully afraid that we should have come sooner to look for Kammer." They waited a few minutes longer, and then the friar found a path leading round the house, and started down it.

A giant of a man suddenly appeared on the path, coming round from the back, and stopped when they greeted him. His bushy grey hair was disarranged, and he was breathing hard. His eyes rolled wildly and he seemed in the grip of a powerful fear.

"You won't believe this," he cried, "but come and see. I don't know who you are, but I am sure Providence has sent me a man of God just when I need one more than I am ever liable to in my whole life.

"No, wait," he cried, waving his arms. "Perhaps I'd better tell you first, as you are in for a horrible shock. I still can hardly believe it, though it's happened three times.

"Did you see in the papers last week the report of a strange find in Sussex?"

"No," said Br. Faneworth and Balfaumé together.

"My task would be easier if you had," said the other, fixing his gaze somewhere to their left. "The newspaper article described a cottage that was found full of stone figures in unexpected postures. One, that of a child, was broken into fragments. No one knew how they got there. There was no sign of the occupants of the cottage, who strangely resembled the figures. They had sublet it for the summer, and its owner could not be located. That was all that appeared in the papers, but I happen to know a good deal more about it.

"Perhaps, though, I should go back to what was, for me, the beginning. My hobby — my passion, even — used to be the collection of artistic oddities — the stranger the better. I gave it up at one time — because of an affliction — but have lately been persuaded to take it up again. In the earlier period, I had come across a report in a 12th century manuscript written by an Italian

monk. He mentioned a painting that turned all who gazed on it to stone — like the Gorgon's head of old. Now I believe, along with Hamlet, that there are more things on Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, but I was not inclined to take this old monk too seriously. I thought he might have been afflicted with an overactive imagination, or perhaps someone who had seen the painting had afterward been paralysed, or become coldhearted, and "turned to stone" was metaphorical. But the tale of a painting that turns men to stone crops up again in the 14th century, in France this time, and once in the 15th, in England. Each time, the painting was supposedly buried, the people being too superstitiously fearful to destroy it. A kind of confirmation is that the painting is never described — as if no one who has seen it could afterward say anything about it.

"Gentlemen, I have that painting! I had advertised a description of the wrappings with which my researches had supplied me, in the archaeological journals—along with a strong, even melodramatic, warning not to open it. I implied something inside that was poison to the touch—for the protection of whoever might discover it. Imagine my excitement when I received a reply from an archaeologist who was digging in Sussex. I arranged to meet him at the small cottage he had taken there with his family. When I arrived, I knocked and called, but there was no reply. I went in, and found what the journalists have described—but unlike them, I understood it. The unexpected postures—for statues—were the natural positions of people suddenly transfixed without warning. The child that broke had been caught off balance. The pity of human curiosity—like Pandora's box. It got

the whole family. On an easel in a corner, as I have since tragically confirmed, was my painting! I wrapped it in newspaper and stowed it under my coat. I reported as much as I dared to the authorities, who could make nothing of it, and came home.

"Now, I live here with my brother Horbert, and we are somewhat reclusive, myself especially, because of the affliction I mentioned. At any rate he was inclined to doubt my interpretation of my senses, and demanded to see the painting. In fact, he snatched it from me and unwrapped it on the spot. We have exchanged no words since, for the very good reason—" Di Mechio's voice broke in a sob, but he recovered and went on,"—for the very good reason that he too had turned to stone. Here, I'll show you," and he wheeled abruptly on the path toward a side door.

"Wait," he turned back. "There is one other thing. You must be wondering why I wasn't affected by the painting. The answer is simple. I am blind, and have been for many years."

He groped for the door, while Br. Faneworth and Balfaumé thought of that wild unfocused gauze, and led them into a bare room that was dominated by a still, chill figure which bore a strong familial resemblance to the man who showed it to them. Balfaumé gingerly reached out a hand to it. "It's stone right enough," he muttered.

"I never thought it would be anything else," nodded the friar. "You tell an amazing story, sir, and I suppose there is more to come. You mention three times. I dread to hear what you will say next."

"And I hate to say it," said the huge man. "I have a friend, Dan Kammer, who is an art expert. He had

heard of the painting as I had, and nothing would satisfy him but to see for himself. I tried to dissuade him, but these skeptics are arrogant in their skepticism. Not like you," he said to the friar. "You know better."

"I know better than to be a disbeliever," agreed Br. Faneworth, "and that is a great help in knowing what to believe."

"Yes," said Di Mechio, "but my friend was a skeptic, and therefore a fool. He was offensive in his insistence and his scoffing. I could still hardly believe myself what I had seen, and I must confess that a horrible fascination came over me to see if it would work again. I told myself he was asking for it and deserved the consequences, if any. In short, I showed him the painting. I wish I hadn't," he added simply, and led the way out of the house and round to the garden.

Balfaumé felt the hairs prickle on his scalp, but Br. Faneworth only fixed his weak gaze upon the transformation of the man who had so recently been their host. For there, in solid stone, stood Dan Kammer.

"This is terrible!" exclaimed Balfaumé.

"Yes," agreed the friar sadly, "murder is always terrible."

"Murder!" cried the detective. "I suppose you could call it that, and the wife hinted at an old enmity, which may have made Dan Kammer a marked man. But if Di Mechio murdered him with the painting, who's to prove it in a court of law?"

"That's not what I meant," said Br. Faneworth. "It seems I am often misunderstood. I am talking about ordinary, or garden variety, murder. Watch out!"

For the blind man was lunging straight at them—whether to attack or escape was never clear. The

detective overpowered him, for he had a wiry strength that was more than a match for the other's great bulk, and was no small man himself. They tied him securely and called the police.

"Though what you will tell them, I don't know," grumbled Balfaumé. "You seem to understand this a good deal better than I."

"I'd better explain," said the friar. "It's surprising how often these clever men make the same mistake. They think that if I believe in my religion, I'll believe in anything else. I don't deny that impossible things can happen, but I do deny that this impossible thing happened. I saw the truth instead, and he knew I saw it."

"Then how do you explain this?" Balfaume gestured toward the immobile Kammer. "And the newspaper article about that family in Sussex?"

"You don't understand yet," said the other. "I don't explain it, for it never happened. There is no such family and no such newspaper article—except in the invention of Di Mechio. That goes for the medieval manuscripts as well."

"But we saw two men turned to stone with our own eyes."

"We saw two statues," said Br. Faneworth firmly. "Made as statues usually are, by a sculptor. The brother, I fancy. That room is his studio, and I suppose he had done a self-portrait in stone. Artists are fond of self-portraits, whether from egotism or the accessibility of the model I have never quite determined, though I daresay it's a combination of the two.

"As for Kammer, you remember his wife saying he often came here lately? It must have been to have himself sculpted as a surprise for her, since the statue is

here, and she didn't know why he came. He came for sittings, but he told her he was coming to look at paintings—as Di Mechio knew and utilized so ingeniously. I should imagine, by the way, that their quarrel was over Kammer's wife. She has told me that she was once engaged to another man, whose brother was a sculptor, but broke it off to marry Kammer. She found him frightening even then.

"Di Mechio apparently never got over it. With Kammer here so often, he needed only bide his time for an opportunity to kill him—whether he lured him here originally by suggesting the sculpture, or the arrangement was made independently between Kammer and Horbert. His chance came today, when the brother was absent from the house—unless he has murdered him too. He invented his whole story on the spur of the moment, when he heard us at the front door looking for Kammer—to gain time for himself and a chance to escape, and prevent us searching for Kammer where we might find him. If I hadn't let him know I saw through it, I think he would have offered to fetch the painting, and that's the last we'd have seen of him.

"After he heard us at the door, he hurried to the studio and shoved the sculptor's gear into cupboards, so we wouldn't think of sculpture in connection with stone men. Then he hauled the second statue out into the garden—there is another door at the back—and came up the path to meet us. He was out of breath from moving the statue, and perhaps also from burying Kammer's body in the garden, as I think he was doing before we came. There is some soil there that looks very freshly dug.

"But he overreached himself. He had to explain why

the painting hadn't turned *him* to stone, and invented his affliction. But I knew that was false, and then saw how the rest was used to cover up a murder."

"All right," said the detective, "how did you know he wasn't blind?"

"Why, how could a blind man tell at a distance that I was a man of God?

"Besides," said the friar, "his name clearly revealed him for what he was and what he did. Think about it."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: What Br. Faneworth means is that Di Mechio anagrams to 'homicide.' For this is another anagram pastiche, and Br. Faneworth himself is better known as Father Brown. His frequent associate, Balfaumé, whom Father Brown at one time captured and influenced so that he ended his criminal career, is actually called Flambeau.

Other anagrams:

Dan Kammer—marked man

Anabel Row (Kammer)—remarkable woman

Horbert—brother

And the author, H. T. Greenstock—creator of Father Brown, and one of the all-time greats—G.K. Chesterton.

15

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOING! RITUAL

by Rif H. Lobster

IT IS SOME time since I have recorded the adventures of my brilliant friend, Mooch Sheckls, owing to a slight indisposition on my part which made writing difficult. Having taken up equestrian pursuits, I fell victim to rider's cramp.

However, I have now cut the horses to return to the cackle, and see that several cases await my documentation. One pretty little problem ensued when Mr. Garfunkel was found dead of cyanide poisoning. I have called it the Case of the Blue Garfunkel. Then there were two entirely separate adventures occurring about the same time and involving the athletic sphere. One concerned a Japanese runner who had been an outlaw friar. It is in my notes as the Nippon Tuck Race. The other concerned those famous broadjumping brothers, the Haskervilles, and is called, quite simply, the Bound of the Haskervilles.

But nothing shows my friend's remarkable talents to better advantage than the case I am about to relate. One rainy October afternoon I had stopped for doughnuts, and was just returning from my rounds to our rooms at

221B Beagl Street, to find Sheckls bent intently over his retorts.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Alimentary, my dear Tweany," he replied. "Trying out a new sauce for our kerpips for tomorrow's breakfast.

"Did you happen to see a mysterious stranger lurking about on the street as you came in?"

"Sheckls!" I cried. "You never cease to amaze me. How did you know?"

"I looked out the window," he dismissed his great powers of observation with an airy wave of the hand. "I observed a widow loitering about as you came by. I have little doubt that she wishes my help."

Together we went to the window.

"Somehow," I said, "I had the impression it was a man. How can you tell it is a widow?"

"What else, when we can see long black skirts beneath the coat, and black sleeves beneath the coat-sleeves. Clearly a woman in mourning."

"Then how do you know she wants your assistance?"

"Actually, Tweany," he said, "I believe she has need of your medical offices as well. Look at that white bandage around her throat. Obviously she has been attacked, thereby incurring a need for both of us. I wouldn't be surprised," he mused thoughtfully, "if the wound had affected the larynx, giving it a basso tone."

"But, Sheckls," I remonstrated, "what about the beard?"

"Ah, Tweany, there you have it! A clever ruse to confuse us. But enough of this idle speculation, for there is the bell, and here is Mrs. Sexes to announce our visitor."

After we had settled our mysterious guest comfortably, and ourselves as well, Sheckls gazed thoughtfully at the stranger and tepeed his fingers.

"Now, Madam," he said, "tell us what brings you here. Aside from the fact that you have recently returned from a safari in Africa, I know nothing."

The visitor gaped in astonishment. "Marvelous!" was the murmured response. "But altogether wrong. I have never been out of London in my life." I noticed with a thrill that it was just as Sheckls had predicted. The voice was distinctly bass. "And why do you call me Madam? My name is Father Sprite."

"Come, come!" my friend exclaimed. "Your raincoat is of a type made exclusively in Africa, generally for wear on safari. It is full of holes and tatters, signifying goring and clawing by ferocious African animals. Your bronzed face also indicates recent outdoor activity under a tropic sun.

"As to your sex, I will humor your wish to be called 'Father,' though I suspect a consultation with Dr. Fugue Minds would not be amiss. However, 'Father' Esprit," he added sternly, "you must be completely honest with us in everything else, or we cannot help you."

"Certainly, Mr. Mooch Sheckls," our guest said in a respectfully awed voice. "But this coat is simply a worn-out cast-off formerly belonging to one of my parishioners and donated to the Relief box. It is — hem — sometimes necessary for me to redirect some of the contributions. Also, I have recently had sun lamp treatments for an acne condition.

"I *am* a priest, whatever you may think, and that is where my problem comes in. Nor," he added hastily, "is it at all the sort of problem you seem to think. For

many years I have been offering my little flock a Sunday evening service, which they attend eagerly in their desire to absorb all the spiritual uplift available to them. But for the past few Sundays, my church has stood virtually empty in the evenings, while I have recognized several of my parishioners hurrying into a building across the street — a great many of the women, and men as well. The front is hung with a banner bearing the inscription 'BOING!' Can you get to the bottom of it?"

"You mean, the basement?" asked my friend. Not waiting for a reply, he went on, "I shall undertake your case, Father Tripes. Quick, Tweany, the calendar! My astute brain deduces, from the fact that we have the funnies in color in our paper today, that it is Sunday, but I wish to take proper care to confirm my deduction. If I am right, we may yet be in time to take action this very night.

"Tell me, Father Stripe, does this other building have a garden?"

Our guest registered astonishment. "Yes, it does, but however did you know?"

"As I thought," Sheckls nodded sagely, "there is a deep plot underfoot. If you will leave us now, I hope to have the matter weeded out and have some word for you by tomorrow morning."

Such was our visitor's excitement and gratitude that he rose at once, wringing my friend's hand, and completely forgot to ask me to look at his throat. I noticed that he had also omitted to tell us about the attack on him.

"Poor woman," Sheckls shook his head sadly when our visitor had gone, "besides everything else, those garments were rather large for her. She surely needs a shrink.

"But now to business," he added, rubbing his hands with Joy, that popular liquid soap. "'BOING' sounds to me like a secret society, and I would be sure that my old enemy was behind it, except that the Colonel is Nomor. But I must get ready at once!"

Without another word he scrambled down the stairs, then bounded back and into his room. When at last he emerged, cleverly disguised as a woman in a dress belonging to Mrs. Sexes, who is quite buxom, I thought he needed a shrink himself.

That was the last I saw of him for several hours. When he finally returned, he was bedraggled and haggard, with deep lines of worry etched on his noble brow.

"It is every bit as bad as I feared, Tweany," he said at last, throwing himself into a chair and muttering under his breath. "Nothing less than a two-pronged plot to overthrow our beloved England. I have foiled them for now, but have I stopped them for good?" He reached into an apron pocket and flung a handful of small wooden disks on the table.

"What does it all mean?" I asked wonderingly.

"You may well ask," he answered. "To begin with, I had little difficulty gaining access to the place, clad as you see me in this admirable disguise. The ruffians demanded money at once, which I paid so that I could remain unobtrusively to discover their plot. No doubt the money serves to further their devilish activities. They gave me a card filled with numbers, and at the top was printed their secret password: BOING!

"You will understand that I knew at once I was on to something big, when I thanked them profusely for the card, and was answered with a muttered, "No big deal." You see the significance of that, of course?"

I had to confess I did not. I am ashamed to admit it, but I cannot always keep up with my friend's razor-sharp mental processes.

"'No big' anagrams to 'Boing' itself. What further proof did I need that something devious was afoot?

"But before I could fully fathom what was purported by 'Boing!,' or, alternatively, 'no big,' a pretty lady began handing wooden pieces like these you see before you to a big, burly man they called Grumbly Bain, who then called out combinations of numbers and letters. I jotted them down till my hand grew weary. Looking for a code, I wasted much precious time equating the numbers with the corresponding letters of the alphabet, which was particularly difficult as the numbers went as high as the thirties, and for the life of me I could not think what letter came after Z, which, as you know, is the twenty-sixth.

"Every now and then some excited person would leap up and shout their password, 'Boing!' This was followed by a pause and excited chatter, more money would change hands, and the number-calling would go on.

"Suddenly I realized how dense I had been. In my efforts to acquire encyclopaedic knowledge, I daresay there is scarcely any subject on which I have not read up, certainly with American sports among them. I now remembered that in the American game called football, much depends on combinations of numbers known only to the players of one team, which they call out before each play. I had understood that at the end of each series, the caller said 'hike,' though that was obviously only a password, for no hiking gear is in evidence on such occasions, and no one ever went for a walk. Ap-

parently, they have changed the password to deceive the opposing teams, and it is now 'Boing!'"

I gazed at my friend with unfeigned admiration. "Only you, Sheckls," I cried, "could have thought of that. But what are these dastards planning to do? And what about these wooden disks you brought in?"

He lifted a thin hand. "One thing at a time, Tweany. You remember, I said the thrust was a double one. At the moment I was fully occupied with fathoming the meaning of their calling out football combinations. It came to me that in teaching the number combinations of their plays to scores of our citizens — for a price, remember — they are laying the groundwork for undermining that grand British institution of Rugby. They will bring in football to crowd Rugby out of our lives; with so many knowing the combination plays, they will prefer football, where they can place their bets to better advantage."

"But how can we stop this dreadful scheme?"

"Tweany, I believe I have already done so," he said solemnly, nodding to the little round bits of wood. "The combinations are read off from these disks. I managed to create a diversion by throwing a stink bomb into a far corner of the room, and under cover of the confusion stole a handful of these things. Now they no longer have the complete figures they need, and they are powerless."

"Sheckls, how brilliant!" I exclaimed worshipfully. "Then you have solved the case after all."

"Ah, if that were the only thing," he sighed. "But it leaves unanswered the question of why they use these little disks at all, which must be difficult to keep in order, rather than writing their numbers on paper like any one else.

"But I have been studying them closely, and I think I see their purpose. Not only do the villains plan to undermine our sports, but our economy as well!"

"No!" I cried. "How did you discover this?"

"What is an industry for which America is especially well-known? The garment industry, is it not? I believe, Tweany," he said impressively, "that what we see here are buttons with which they intend to sabotage our industry so that theirs may take over. Look closely. *These buttons have no holes!* Distributed to our garment manufacturers in great quantities, do you see what it would mean? Our clothing industry would collapse, and we should be forced to buy from Americans! Having replaced one of our industries and one of our sports with their own, they would be in a position to make us one of their colonies! (Or states, as they are called nowadays.) I presume they printed their numbers on these buttons in a move to combine the equipment for the two schemes and so reduce luggage space, as well as to confuse the trail. But it would take more than that to confuse Mooch Sheckls!"

"I am sure you are right!" I said in great excitement. "But what will you do now?"

"I must confess to being stumped for the moment as to how to stop this dastardly ploy. Can we enlist that old fool Redlites from Scotland Yard? Or my brother Firstcroc?

"I think," he said grimly, "that if I could crack the Boing! code, we might see daylight. I shall stay up all night for that purpose." He spoke coldly, a sure sign that the fire in the grate had gone out.

I left him pouring over the enigmatic letters. A tired but jubilant face greeted me next morning, when I

joined him to partake of our daily kerpips.

"It was quite simple after all," he explained happily. "I was stupid not to see it at once. The numerical value of the letters in 'Boing!' adds up to forty-seven, with B counting for 2, 0 for 15, and so on. Now, what does the number forty-seven suggest to you?"

I must have looked blank, for he added without further ado, "I can see you are puzzled. But what is the country behind all this nefarious business? Ah, light dawns, does it not?"

"But surely, Sheckls," I said doubtfully, "they have forty-*eight* states."

"Exactly!" he beamed. "Really, Tweany, you are getting on. They also have the District of Columbia, which in a sense makes forty-nine. Now if we arrange the states and D.C. alphabetically — and I have my Atlas here; I know how to use reference works most cogently, as you know — the forty-seventh state is *West Virginia!*"

"I'm afraid I still don't see—" I murmured, hanging my head.

"I understand, Tweany," he said kindly. "It does take a brain of the first magnitude. But with a little adroit rearrangement of letters, we have *Virginia West!* I have no doubt that we shall find she was the young lady who handed the numbers to the man who called them out, and the ringleader of this entire plot! We have but to locate her and inform her that Mooch Sheckls is onto her game, and of course she will desist!"

My eyes were positively shining with Admiration (a new ointment I have been trying recently) as I composed the required message.

"And now for a telegram to Father Ripest, Tweany,

to reassure that poor confused transvestite that his flock will return to him on Sunday nights.

"Is there anything of interest in the newspaper, requiring my unique assistance?"

"Only this, Sheckls," I replied, scanning the article I had been reading. "Some maniac last night disrupted a fund-raising game that has been held regularly on Sunday nights, to raise money for a new school. It was sponsored by a civic-minded group called the Brotherhood Of the Illiterate New Generation. It seems this crazy person — 'of indeterminate sex,'" — I quoted, "not only drove them out of the building, but also stole some of their equipment, so that the game cannot be resumed."

"How terrible!" cried my friend, showing that keen compassion for which he is so much beloved. "Nothing is more important than education, as I think I myself can show to good example. I must offer my services at once to apprehend the villain and recover the purloined equipment.

"Another telegram, Tweany, if you please!"

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I trust the readers recognized what Mooch Sheckls, in his peculiar relation to the obvious, did not: That the initials of the 'Brotherhood Of the Illiterate New Generation' spell 'Boing!' Of course readers recognized, in this anagram pastiche, that 'Boing!' as well as 'no big' anagrams to Bingo!

To my knowledge, pastiches on pastiches are rare, if they exist at all, yet Schlock Homes has tempted me for years, so, finally, here is his anagram counterpart, Mooch Sheckls. Tweany, of course, represents Watney, his faithful partner at 221B Bagel Street, here anagrammed to Beagl Street. (I also considered Blage Street.) Their

housekeeper, Mrs. Essex, has become Mrs. Sexes. Lestride is one of the more frequently used names for the Scotland Yard detective, here offered as Redlites. Homes' brother Criscroft is anagrammed as Firstcroc. This is the only story in the series containing some proper names which are not anagrams, which seemed necessary to provide the proper-name puns I felt this story called for. However, I did succeed in a pun-and-anagram in one with Colonel Nomor, an anagram of Colonel Moron.

Other anagrams: Kippers, which appear on Schlock's breakfast table with undeviating regularity, are here given the anagram of kerpips.

The priest, as I hope the readers noticed, provided a variety of anagrams, being variously called Father Sprite, Esprit, Tripes, Stripe, and Ripest.

Sigmund Freud was referred to as Dr. Fugue Minds

Big burly man — Grumbly Bain

Finally, in regard to the author of the extremely clever and witty Schlock Homes stories, Robert L. Fish: Since he himself writes also under the name of Pike, I felt something fishy was definitely called for; ergo — Rif H. Lobster.

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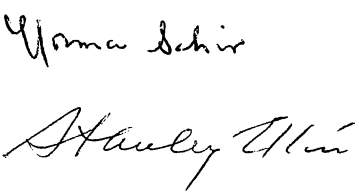

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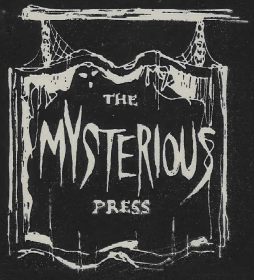

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